JEAN RITCHIE & ANNDRENA BELCHER ON THE SET OF *NEXT OF KIN*

Now & Then's Appalachian Movie Guide

NOW AND THEN

The Appalachian Magazine

Center for Appalachian Studies and Services /Institute for Appalachian Affairs
East Tennessee State University

From *Deliverance* to *Fat Monroe*

THE MEDIA & APPALACHIA

Actor Ned Beatty appeared in *Deliverance* in 1972, the film that has proved to be the greatest incentive for non-Southerners to stay on the interstate. More recently Beatty starred in *Fat Monroe*, a dramatic film based on a story from Gurney Norman's *Kinfolks,* and produced in 1990 at Appalshop, Eastern Kentucky's media production center.

•*Mountain Eagle* •APPALSHOP•

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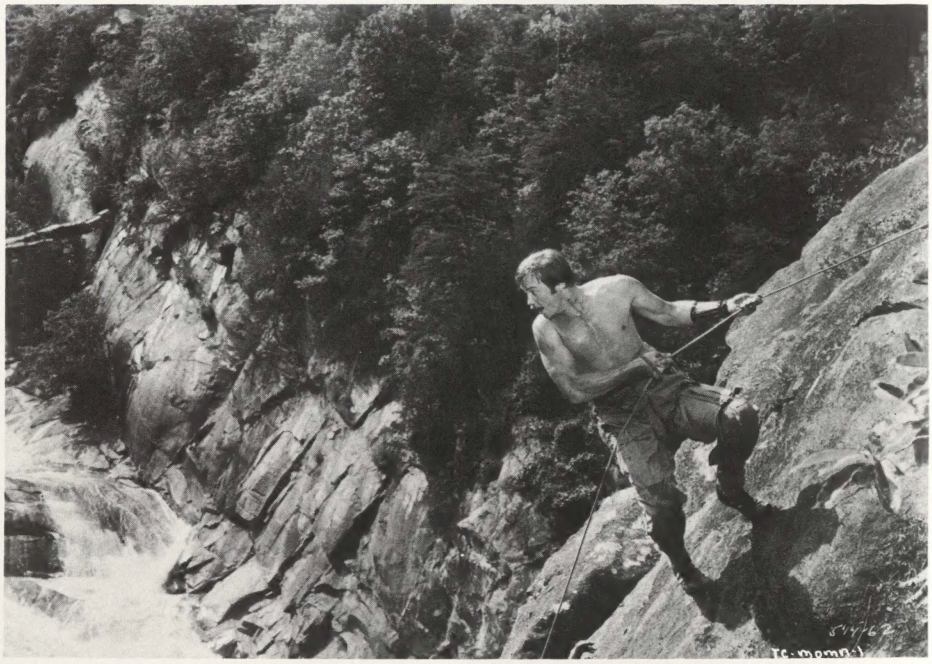
Sissy Spacek as country singer Loretta Lynn in *Coal Miner's Daughter*. Lynn commented about the film biography, **"My life was much worse than in the movie."** See *Now and Then*'s movie guide, page 8.

Courtesy of the Kingsport Times-News

Patrick Swayze as an Eastern Kentuckian who takes on the Mafia in *Next of Kin*. **". . . The people who have the money to make a commercial film with a handsome, hip-slinging stud of a star like Patrick Swayze are really not committed to telling the truth,"** says Anndrena Belcher, who appeared in *Next of Kin*. See "Relatively Strange," page 22.



Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art

Jon Voight in *Deliverance*. **"Degenerate Inbred Hillbillies vs. Male Bonding City Slickers,"** is how Sandra Ballard describes the film that made Appalachia infamous. See *Now and Then*'s movie guide, page 8.

Fall 1991
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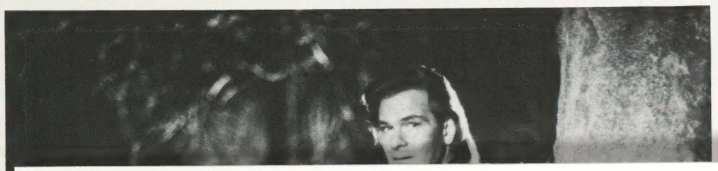

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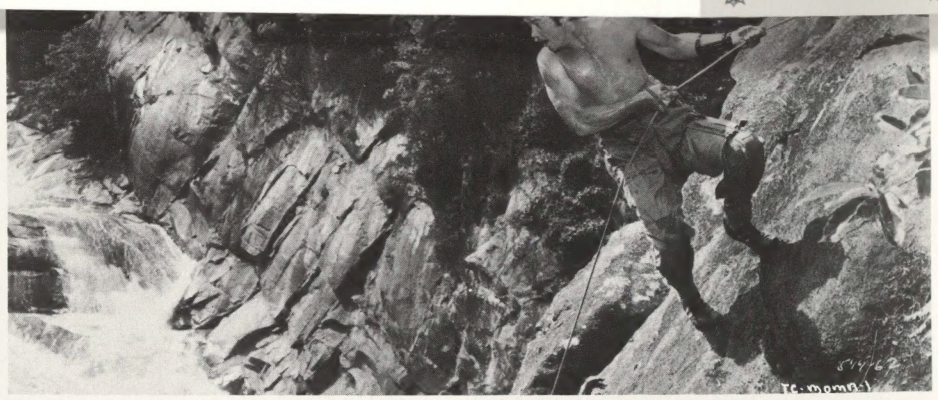

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Submissions of poetry, fiction, articles, personal essays, graphics and photographs concerned with Appalachian life past and present are welcomed if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

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Who Invented Appalachia?

Who determines how Appalachia is presented to the outside world and to itself? This issue of *Now and Then* explores Appalachia in the media, as well as the media in Appalachia. Whether we are dealing with movies, radio, TV or popular literature, we find ourselves reconsidering questions of stereotyping and self-definition that continually resurface in Appalachian Studies.

As Allen Batteau contends in *The Invention of Appalachia,* (see review on page 36), the recurrent images of Appalachia in American mass media and popular culture have largely been fabricated by outsiders. Though there are some notable recent exceptions, such as Appalshop and *The Mountain Eagle*, the people of the Southern Appalachians have had little to say about how this region has been portrayed to the world at large. The testimonies of thoughtful natives of the Southern Appalachians like Anndrena Belcher and Jean Ritchie concerning their involvement in the film *Next of Kin,* which starred Patrick Swayze as a natural mountain man pitted against big city mafiosi, make fascinating yet painful reading, as does John Soos' wry commentary on the rewriting of the history of his hometown in Virginia, which provided the setting for a Maxwell House Coffee commercial.

Characteristically typecast as bestial villains, bumptious clowns, nostalgia-provoking children of nature or pathetic victims of poverty and oppression, Appalachians have been symbolic counterfoils to the expansive thrust of the progressive urban industrial mainstream of American society. Though it is no longer socially or politically correct to portray most other American minority groups in degrading and dehumanizing terms, hillbillies and rednecks appear to be exceptions to this rule.

Perceived as marginal to the South as well as to mainstream America, Appalachian people, according to Batteau, must contend with a deeply rooted sense of "double otherness," which can be overcome only through a profound transformation of consciousness leading to a reconfigured sense of personal and collective identity. Patterned like a rite of passage, identity reformulation entails the critical examination of externally imposed definitions of selfhood, the exploration of alternative possibilities, and, ultimately, the recovery of a primal state of self-defined authenticity and integrity, often symbolized by return to an idealized pastoral community in which nature and culture are in harmony.

But Appalachian Studies itself is far more than a form of pastoral romanticism. This latest issue of *Now and Then* attempts to come to terms with questions that may express themselves in the specific context of Appalachia but are actually universal in scope and import. While this is a serious endeavor, I hope you also enjoy the flashes of wit and good humor that lighten this exploration. If you appreciate this magazine and would like to see the work of the Center for Appalalachian Studies and Services continue to flourish, become a friend of CASS. We need your support now more than ever.

—Richard Blaustein, Director

Now and Then Magazine

Our Own Media

Tom Gish, editor of *The Mountain Eagle*, was aggravated at *Now and Then.* When I went to interview him, he told me why. We had challenged Harry Caudill, author of *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* and other books that brought Appalachian issues to the forefront of American minds in the 1960s. Caudill was the true Appalachian hero. But a portion of what Caudill believed was something that many people interested in Appalachian issues had been discussing with some irritation for years—the idea of genetic inferiority, the idea that the Appalachian mountains contained an inbred people who had lost the will to compete and that the intelligent ones had left the region. In all these years, no one had conducted a scientific review of the Caudill gene pool theories. We asked medical anthropologist Pamela Zahorik to take on the task. Her findings were published as "Night Comes to the Chromosomes," in the "Health in Appalachia" issue (Spring 1989). We sent Caudill a copy and asked for his comments.

Caudill and Gish, both of Whitesburg, Ky., were friends. Gish said, "Harry was sick. He didn't need it." The following fall Harry Caudill died by his own hand. And Gish also told me that those of us within the region shouldn't be bashing each other.

Gish softened and said, "Well, of course you couldn't have known Harry was sick." I said that was true, and I wouldn't have arranged to confront Caudill at that time if I had known. But I held out that challenging current views of Appalachia was exactly what I thought *Now and Then* should be doing. I tried to explain that I felt we needed to explore popular assumptions about the region, even the ideas of Appalachia's most respected thinkers. Gish nodded and we proceeded with our interview (which appears on page 14).

It is this region's own media—magazines including *Now and Then, Appalachian Journal* and *Appalachian Heritage,* newspapers such as *The Mountain Eagle* and the media production center, Appalshop—that provide a means for us to look at ourselves, a place for discussion of the broad and fine points of Appalachian culture and economics, a place for writers to tell stories and for us to get to know the movers and shakers.

The purpose of the discussion in Appalachia's own media is not so much to educate those outside the region. To my mind the purpose is to develop our own images, our own definitions, our own priorities. This is a way for the residents of Appalachia to gain power in a region that has had little power in the past. Harry Caudill started the process. We must carry it on as best we can without him.

—Pat Arnow, Editor

Broadside Television

One of the Archives' most valuable and most used collections of manuscripts and audiovisual materials came from Broadside Television.

Broadside was the brainchild of Ted Carpenter, a native Canadian raised in New England. Carpenter came to Tennessee via the VISTA program and was fascinated by Appalachian mountain culture. He saw the potential of portapac and small video format technology for recording and examining that culture.

Carpenter founded Broadside in November 1972 with a two-year grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, administered by First Tennessee-Virginia Development District. His model was the community newspaper—hence the name "Broadside."

In East Tennessee, where television reception was poor, cable service was well established. Moreover, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) mandated that cable operators produce a certain amount of locally originated programming. Carpenter convinced local operators to give Broadside their local programming budgets. Broadside then could use its own discretion as to the types of programs it produced. In return, however, Broadside agreed to produce a certain number of hours of bluegrass music and wrestling, favorite subjects of the cable operators.

With grant funding Broadside produced programs on Central Appalachia, covering such topics as coal mining, energy and environmental needs, land use, folk arts and music, education, aging and regional history. The Southern Appalachian Video Ethnography Series (SAVES), directed by Richard Blaustein at ETSU, is of particular interest, focusing on traditional mountain music, crafts and lifestyles.

Broadside also served as a clearing house to distribute tapes to schools and community groups throughout Appalachia and contracted with local establishments (e.g., Memorial Hospital in Johnson City) to make instructional films.

Broadside's fortunes changed in 1974 when the FCC dropped its requirement that cable operators provide locally originated programming. Faced with the loss of most of its funding, Broadside had to reevaluate programming strategy. This task fell primarily to Carpenter's successors, as he left in 1975 to head the Citizens Committee for Broadcasting. In 1978, unable to maintain its operation, Broadside filed for bankruptcy.

In 1979 the Archives obtained the Broadside collection. It included a small number of 3/4" U-Matic cassettes, but most of the 608 tapes were 1/2" reel-to-reel, helical scan video tapes. Invented in the late 1960s, the 1/2" helical scan format is now obsolete, so it is hard to find a working helical scan player.

The Archives seeks funding to preserve the valuable Broadside tapes. Approximately 200 1/2" tapes need to be dubbed onto 3/4" video cassettes. The need becomes more critical as the tapes age and it becomes increasingly difficult to find recorders which play the reel-to-reel videos. For more information, contact the Archives at 615/929-4338, Box 70665, ETSU, Johnson City, TN 37614.

—Norma Myers, Head, Archives and Special Collections
—Marie Tedesco, Public Services Archivist

Carroll Reece Museum

Printing Presses

The Reece Museum has reinstalled its exhibit of early printing in Tennessee with a Washington Hand Press as its focal point. This press was manufactured between 1835 and 1886 by A.B. Taylor and Company.

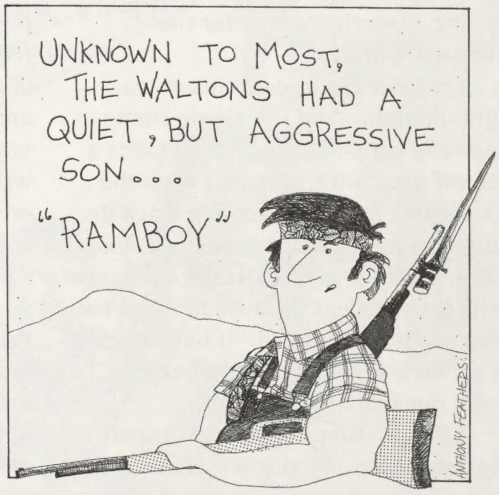
Donated in 1979 by Associated Advisors, Inc., Cherry Hill, N.J., agents for the disposal of properties, the press came from the Pressmen's Home, center of the International Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union of North America. University personnel transported the press from the Pressman's Home site near Rogersville, Tenn., where it had stood on the lawn of the Administration Building since 1924.

The press was used from 1886 to1906 by the Rogersville *Herald*, just steps away from the first printing in the state of Tennessee by George Roulstone on November 5, 1791. (A little colony then known as Hawkins Courthouse was home to the *Knoxville Gazette* for nearly a year before Roulstone moved it to Knoxville.)

Other items related to early printing have also been donated to the museum since 1979 by the late Eleanor Sheets, editor of the *Rogersville Review*.

Northeast Tennessee is steeped in the state's printing history. *The Manumission Intelligencer*, the first anti-slavery paper in the country, was established by Elisha Embree in 1819 in Jonesborough; and the Kingsport Press, for many years the largest book production house in the world, began in the early 1920s. They join the Pressmen's Home as Northeast Tennessee monuments to printing. The early print shop exhibit at the Reece highlights that aspect of our history.

—Helen Roseberry, Director



Are We Famous Yet ?

by Frank Soos

They have made a television commercial in Pocahontas, Va., my home town. My dad and I stood around with the other loafers and watched it happen: rental truckloads full of gear, rental cars full of people as foreign to us as space aliens, though we heard they were only from Atlanta.

Remember Doctor Death? Maybe you remember his real name, George Atkinson. He was a defensive back for the Oakland Raiders who believed that every picture snapped sapped your aura. That's why, if you ever do see a photograph of him, he's sort of falling out of the frame—doing what he could, I imagine, to keep what little bit of his aura was left from getting away.

I don't hold much with television, having given away the only one I owned in 1976. Occasionally, the desire, the need, to see a ball game will come on me with such force that I will have to connive a way into a friend's house or will have to visit a bar. Bars make me extremely uncomfortable, and friends often have family members who don't like basketball or otherwise don't like their regular viewing habits interfered with. Because, excluding me and some others like me, Americans live for the televised world.

I believe George Atkinson was right, though. And if a single frame squeezed off a 35 mm camera takes a bite off your aura, consider what the continuous feed of videotape must do. I think of television personalities like Johnny Carson and realize he manages to look so ageless because his aura has been totally decimated. It has ceased to be; he's a soulless being free to haunt our late night forever.

So television people cast a spell over our town. First it was their clothes: men in baggy shorts that flopped all the way down to their knees, women in spandex sports brassieres and nothing else at all on top, all of them carrying a variety of bull horns, stop watches, clipboards, those little clapper things recording date, time, and scene that even we knew were an obligatory bit of movie making equipment. As I had often imagined, making a commercial was a grand scale undertaking on the level of a civil war battle or a professional football game.

"As I had often imagined, making a commercial was a grand scale undertaking on the level of a civil war battle or a professional football game."

I have stood on the field of battle for the first Manassas and wondered what it took to get men to march toward each other, into each other, to murder one another at close range. Clearly, it required a setting aside of all that was practical and rational; it required the ultimate will to make a fool of oneself.

I'm not sure how it got around that the commercial was being made in our town. Maybe there was an ad in the Bluefield *Daily Telegraph*, but people poured in from every wide spot in the road for a chance to play a part in the commercial. I should say that things are rough in the coalfields. Out-of-work miners have been sitting home wringing their hands for months going on years waiting for the mines to reopen.

People were told to dress as they would in the 1930s or 40s. They did. But I would say people dressed as the movies and their televisions told them they had looked in the 1930s and 40s: in the style of the Joads of *The Grapes of Wrath*, in the style of "The Beverly Hillbillies," of the *Li'l Abner* movie. Brogans, bib overalls, hats with the crowns punched out, calico dresses, high button shoes, straw hats with sprigs of plastic flowers. My dad says that when the mines were working full-time, a salesman from Hart, Schaffner and Marx came through our town every year taking measurements and orders for tailor-made suits. The bosses weren't the only ones who bought such suits; the miners did, too.

Here is what brought these commercial makers to my home town: it has hardly changed at all since 1940. Then it was a rich little town in the heart of the coalfields. The mines worked every day, the trains ran, the bars stayed open loud and late. There were dances, ball games, revivals. People lived here.

When I was a boy, maybe around 1960, the town poured asphalt paving over the brick main street. Underneath, the bricks are still there. The storefronts that line the street still mostly have the cast iron facades. Over the years, a few have burned down, leaving gaps like pulled teeth. More recently, others have begun to fall down from simple neglect.

My dad and I sat up on a grassy bank in front of where the new senior citizen apartments had replaced Tut Sayers' garage and the liquor store and the old Western Auto and watched them shoot the commercial all day. Like the dozens of other people there, we felt like we had nothing better to do. The high school band was there, four majorettes and about 50 kids in their very up-to-date band outfits and their borrowed silver sousaphones that made a small gesture toward

how it must have been. They were to form the heart of a parade commemorating the end of World War II. Also included: two mounted policemen with trooper hats, Sam Browne belts and side arms; a collection of veterans in American Legion campaign caps; others in World War I era uniforms complete with puttees; a group of men and women, both black and white, dressed simply in dark pants or skirts and white shirts who would carry a large 48-star flag; our town's old '46 Chevy fire truck driven by Peaches Odham, former fire chief. The other extras were to line the streets and cheer, wave their smaller flags, as the parade led by a color guard of veterans of the more recent war passed.

Before each take there was a lot of hollering of instructions through bull horns. Everybody cheer! No sunglasses! The band cranked up a thundering street beat more suggestive of a cavalcade featuring elephants and belly dancers than any kind of military band. Then it broke into a fanfare of what sounded like the kind of movie music used to indicate Indians with sinister intentions are lurking nearby. The whole of the very short parade moved out of St. Clair street and around the curve onto Center Street where it went a couple hundred feet, marching right over the camera man who'd placed himself squarely on the yellow line in the middle of the road.

Everybody broke apart and the whole outfit dragged itself back up to the starting point for another take. "This ought to knock the Hollywood out of them," the band director, my old band director, said. It's true that the kids especially, the band members, the children cast as urchins in black high-top canvas shoes with their ball caps pulled on sideways, were showing signs of wilting. Even I, sitting on the sunny bank, was starting to get bored. Dad and I walked down the street and talked to some of the loafers, took a look at some of the oddball vintage cars that had been drawn to town for this event: a '40 Ford cop car, a couple of large trucks, nicely restored, a '48 Chevy that's been poorly made into a kind of street rod, an old Indian motorcycle—a sloppy restoration up close. There was a '30s-era touring car, a couple of late-1940s Cadillacs. One of these Cadillacs was actually being used in the commercial, zooming up the street as the band began, a flag-waving extra hanging out every window.

Did I say the town hadn't changed much at all? I misspoke myself. It has all changed, little by little as more people have gone away or died. They couldn't take the place with them though. It's been left to fall apart or be picked to pieces bit by bit. There are streets in this town where a dog can sleep for hours without having to get up and move out of the road. Empty houses go begging for somebody to live in them and fix them up. There's a whole row of empty storefronts left waiting for enterprise to fill them up.

Something like a set for a movie to take place in the Appalachian coalfields any time from the turn of the century forward, but you don't have to build it. You might have to shift things around a little. The counter from Nick Christ's restaurant was dragged up the street to the old Kroger store, and the booths from the Anchor were pulled up and moved over there, too. The window glass was put back and the more recent plastic Cut-Rate Grocery sign came down. A sign painter from Bluefield came in and gave all the empty stores names they never had before, and the crew from the commercial filled the windows up with merchandise.

My Dad and Lizzie Elmore were talking. She was all dressed up as a matronly extra, but she was looking across the way at some of the younger women extras. "We didn't wear them that long then, did we, Frank? There was a war on; you had to wear your dresses short." They laughed.

Lots of other things about the commercial aren't exactly right: the Cadillac, too fine, too new for so soon after the war. The band in its bright orange and black polyester uniforms. The men and women carrying the flag. At first I couldn't figure out who they were supposed to be. Then I heard one of the commercial makers calling for the union members. In those days, the only union was the down and dirty United Mine Workers of America—a tough union in an ugly anti-union industry. Black and white men worked side by side in the coal mines, but they had separate bath houses and separate lives outside the mines. No women were allowed. Do you think the company that built this little town would let the union march? The flag they carried, spread out like a bed sheet, was right. It had forty-eight stars.

How much should any of that matter? I have been studying the writer Alice Munro lately. She believes that even inanimate objects have a kind of aura or whatever you want to call it. Buildings, cars, small towns falling down in the hills, all have a complicated existence as things. To pick them up and slap them into a story or a TV commer-

So television people cast a spell over our town. First it was their clothes: . . . women in spandex sports brassieres and nothing else at all on top

Dan Childress

cial is to rob them somehow. Dr. Death would understand what she means, I'm sure.

It's not a question of wearing things out, like you might wear out an old brogan shoe. You might wear that shoe out, and since it's a shoe that cost $19.99 and came from Korea by way of Sears, you would be on the verge of throwing it away. You could not, because of the way it was made, take it to Jim Taylor's shoe shop and have him put on a new sole, a new heel. Besides, Jim Taylor is dead, and his original shoe shop was another one of the buildings that was taken down to make the new senior citizen apartments, and the liquor store has moved into the place he had after that. But if you saved your brogan, you could have worn it down to try out for the commercial.

A TV screen is small. Close attention to detail doesn't matter so much. You think anybody could count the stars on that flag as it went by?

Nobody could have guessed that from the time the commercial was shot to the time it turned up mostly on morning news-and-chat shows that we would go to war over the price of oil, that the opinion polls would show we were fools for patriotism. These days we love red, white and blue bunting, and those dime-store sized flags are everywhere.

The way it goes is that Edna Drosick gets to say the line, "Reckon the boys'll be coming home soon," over top of some fiddle music and while holding a steeping pot of the product.

Edgar Shew drinks a sip of the product; people come and go in what got named the Blue Moon Cafe, and outside the parade ambles down the street.

They say the location scouts for the movie *Matewan* looked our town over and then picked someplace else. And now I've heard another outfit is thinking about us. In Atlanta, maybe in Hollywood too, they know where we are. I imagine they have some folders of color and black and white pictures of our houses and stores.

It's not a question of wearing the town out. That will take care of itself. Kids just being kids are taking the old Butt Coffin Shop down a stick at a time. The rain and the wind have been working the sandy cement from between the bricks of the courthouse for years. And there are places up any of the hollows where houses stood that have gone back to weeds and will eventually go back to woods.

Now that I've seen it, I've got to wonder why the people who made it needed so many tries at each scene. A sharp-dressed guy and a pretty blonde woman went up the single step and into the door of the Blue Moon as a young guy in uniform walked forward and took a seat in a booth in the cafe. They must have filmed that 20 times, the big smoldering lights, the little white umbrellas, the hydraulic lifts for the cameras.

Fifty bucks a day for the extras is what they paid. The ones who had speaking parts got more, though nobody is saying exactly how much.

What were we supposed to do? I'm thinking of Gary Cooper as Sergeant York retreating to his mountaintop with his Bible and hound dog to try to decide whether killing people is the right thing to do. How easy it is to be bamboozled in such matters, and even to be made to feel pretty good about yourself afterwards.

I was back home recently because Pocahontas isn't truly where I live these days either. There's no work I could do there, and besides maybe I don't fit so comfortably anymore. But I have this funny sense of ownership as I walk or jog around town checking out everything that changes or remains the same. My preserve of memories.

Ann and Mickey Jones have bought Mrs. Bloch's house, and they plan to fix it up and maybe live there when he retires from the service. I went to first grade there, lots of us did, especially if our birthdays fell too late to go to regular school up on the hill. And Ann asked me as we stood in the old classroom if I remembered whether the blackboard had been fixed to the wall. I didn't, but my pal Alfred did when I saw him on the street—he remembered suffering at that board. I remember getting the tiniest star Mrs. Bloch could draw with her red pencil up in the corner of a page in my reader one particularly bad day. And I remember, or have the picture to remind me, my first day in my stiff new blue jeans, my bookbag in hand as I open the gate and get ready to walk up to the house.

So there would be Alf's memories and my own and my brother's, and Ann's brothers Herb and Don's and the other kids', a dozen or so a year, I guess, as long as Mrs. Bloch kept a school there. If Ann were to turn the room back into a classroom, I can't imagine that any of us wouldn't welcome the chance to walk back in there and sit at one of the low benches and see what memories came along with the smells of the thick manila paper and pencil shavings.

There would be a complicated overlap of moments shared and private, things some of us remembered well and some had forgotten entirely. Some lost, truly forgotten by us all even though they really did happen. Maybe Mrs. Bloch would remember.

Now, who could claim those moments?

This, I think, is what Alice Munro is getting at. Over the last decade, I have written some short stories myself. Sometimes they're about a place not so different from the Pocahontas anybody can see and walk around in. Once I found

"Buildings, cars, small towns falling down in the hills, all have a complicated existence as things. To pick them up and slap them into a story or a TV commercial is to rob them somehow."

it necessary to move the liquor store down the street to when the old dime store had been where I was a kid, a location close to where it got moved anyway when the senior citizen apartments went in. When I read this story with my brother in the audience, I found myself offering a short geographical preamble—just for him. Nobody else there could possibly have known or cared. It seemed the least I could do for the place.

What, then, are we supposed to do? When strangers in rental cars come sniffing around taking pictures with expensive cameras, it could mean a chance for Pocahontas to get to be a going concern once more. Friends and neighbors will turn up on national TV at breakfast time. The pay's good, the work kind of like Li'l Abner's job with the mattress company.

It's hard, even when trying your best to come at a place with precision and compassion. In many respects, in my use of detail and memory, I know I will have been wrong. I'm sure if you asked my Dad, you'd find he saw it all differently for different reasons. What the commercial makers wanted us to see was something else entirely.

We used to have town parades kind of like the one in the commercial, on Memorial Day, on the Fourth. The high school band in older woolly uniforms cut in the West Point style—monkey suits we called them—would form up at the top of Center Street, maybe just around the curve, and the Legion would have a color guard to lead us. From there, we'd march down the street where the merchants had put their flags out in the holes set into the sidewalks. It was a short parade, maybe we played "High School Cadets." When we stopped one year in the street and played "Go Twist" so the majorettes could dance, my pal Tim Nowlin pitched a fit. It had to do with what he saw as the seriousness of the occasion.

Recently, back at work in Alaska, I was in a friend's office and picked up a clip of bullets. A paperweight, he said, made of live rounds from an old Springfield rifle. I knew Springfield rifles, and I told him about the Legionnaires and that moment each Memorial Day when after we had heard at least one prayer and one speech with another prayer to follow, the color guard was ordered to salute the dead. Standing in the grass plot of the war memorial right next to the dentist's office, several old guys in their campaign caps tried to fire three rounds off from guns that had been left sitting since the last august occasion. Maybe one guy got off a shot, maybe two. At least two others, red-faced and cussing, worked furiously at the bolts of their guns. The band struck up the National Anthem, we had the final prayer, and we all went home.

Frank Soos is at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Pickles

Labeled like a cucumber in a jar,
Pickled, preserved in the image
they saw.
You wear SHOES!
Listen to her accent!
Say something else.
(Okay, how 'bout go to hell?)
Wanting to scream:
Yes, I wear shoes,
No, I'm not stupid,
I'm not slow,
I don't have sex with kin, not even cousins.
Okay, so I kissed a cousin.
Don't have to start hummin'
theme from *Deliverance*.
Now, I live among others
who've been pickled:
Spaniards,
Mexicans,
Indians.
I watch them flamenco and perform the Corn Dance.
A celebration of heritage.
At home, with ears perked for bluegrass
on TNN, I fling my shoes
and buck dance,
or close as I can get to it,
before the kiva fireplace.
Soup beans and corn bread
scent my house and
not just because they combine
to form a complete protein, but a more
complete me.
Last year I bought a dulcimer,
hand-made in Waynesville, North Carolina.
I struggle with Cripple Creek
and Wildwood Flower.
That's hillbilly music,
a friend says,
and instead of cringing
I say,
Dang right, care for a pickle?

—Lisa Claire Vernon

*Lisa Claire Vernon has written for the **Johnson City Press**, **Phoenix Magazine** and **Albuquerque Monthly**. She lives in Tucson, Ariz.*

The Hills Meet Hollywood

The *Now & Then* Guide to Selected Feature Films About Appalachia

Agee
1978 D: Ross Spears. The life of author James Agee: a composite of interviews with friends, admirers and lovers; dramatic reenactments of episodes from his letters and fictional works; montages of archival photographs and sound recordings. Academy Award Nominee, 1980, Best Feature Documentary. Original music by Kenton Coe. A documentary classic. (RB)

All the Way Home
1963 D: Alex Segal. Jean Simmons, Robert Preston. Dramatization of James Agee's *A Death in the Family*, the story of a family's survival after the death of the father, seen through the eyes of a child. Set in Knoxville, Tenn.

Bad for Each Other
1953 D: Irving Rapper. Charlton Heston, Lizbeth Scott. Doctor returns to his gritty home town in Pennsylvania after a mine disaster and finds the people more worthy than the high tone folks he had been treating.

Big Business
1988 D: Jim Abrahams. Lily Tomlin, Bette Midler. Two sets of twins separated at birth and paired up wrong. One set belongs to a wealthy New York City couple, the other to down-home rubes in Jane Lew, W.Va. Years later the West Virginia twins go to New York to save their town from a unfeeling corporation and find their doubles running the company. No one comes off well in this high-concept farce, least of all Jane Lew.

Blaze
1989 D: Ron Shelton. Lolita Davidovich, Paul Newman. Biography of Blaze Starr, an innocent but levelheaded West Virginian who becomes a stripper and the lover of Louisiana governor Earl K. Long. The West Virginia family and setting are presented with a certain amount of dignity.

A Breed Apart
1984 D: Philippe Mora. Rutger Hauer, Powers Boothe, Kathleen Turner, Donald Pleasance. North Carolina scenery is best thing about this poached and rancid tale of a mountain climber commissioned to steal rare eagle eggs. Turner is a fishing-supply store owner whose Manhattan-cum-Appalachian twang goes all over the place. (CW)

Butterfly
1981 D: Matt Cimber. Stacy Keach, Pia Zadora, Orson Welles, Edward Albert. Based on James Cain's novel about his experience as a coal miner in West Virginia in 1922. Trashy soap opera. (LM)

Key to Symbols:

Stereotypes to

Bad accents

Promiscuity

Violence

Macho

Good music

Recommended

Christmas Miracle in Caulfield, U.S.A.
1977 Made for TV. D: Jud Taylor. Mitchell Ryan, Kurt Russell, John Carradine, Melissa Gilbert. Based on a true incident of a coal mine explosion on Christmas Eve, a *Waltons* clone.

Coal Miner's Daughter
1980 D: Michael Apted. Sissy Spacek, Tommy Lee Jones, Beverly D'Angelo, Levon Helm, Ernest Tubb. American success story from Appalachia, or hillbilly woman makes good, with a healthy push from her lusty, ambitious husband. Spacek's Loretta Lynn convincingly sings her way out of Butcher Holler, Ky., and into the heart of Nashville. Spacek did her own singing and won an Oscar. (SB)

Comin' Round the Mountain
1951 D: Charles Lamont. Bud Abbott and Lou Costello come to the hills to bring the folk tune to life (sort of) and get involved with mountain feuds. (SB)

Country Music Holiday
1958 D: Alvin Ganzer. Ferlin Husky, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Rocky Graziano, June Carter, The Jordanaires, Drifting Johnny Miller. A hillbilly's rise to fame; lots of songs dominate this curio. (LM)

The Curse
1987 D: David Keith. Wil Wheaton, Claude Akins, John Schneider, Eugene Wolf. Knoxville native—actor Keith—makes his directorial debut filming a horror movie on location in Maryville, Tenn. A meteorite comes to town, poisoning produce and making everyone crazy. Don't eat your vegetables. (DD)

Daniel Boone
1936 D: David Howard. George O'Brien, Heather Angel, John Carradine. Dan'l leads settlers from North Carolina to Kentucky.

Daniel Boone, Trail Blazer
1956 D: Albert C. Gannaway. Ismael Rodriquez, Bruce Bennett, Lon Chaney. Dan'l fights the Indians. Filmed in Mexico.

Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier
1955 D: Norman Foster. Fess Parker, Buddy Ebsen. Pieced together from Disney's TV show, the adventures of Davy (Fess Parker) and sidekick (Ebsen). Of the five movies made from the *Frontierland* series only the first was set in Appalachia.

Deliverance
1972 D: John Boorman. Burt Reynolds, Jon Voight, Ned Beatty, Ronny Cox, Billy McKinney, Herbert "Cowboy" Coward, James

DIRECTOR: PAT ARNOW ART DIRECTOR: KIMBERLY BOYD
ART: BRYAN ALBRITTON, SCOTT COMPTON, LINDA COVEN, KENNY THACKER
RESEARCH & COMMENTARY: SANDY BALLARD, RICHARD BLAUSTEIN, DARLA DYE, TONEY FRAZIER, RON GILES, DREMA REDD, CATHY WHALEY, J.W. WILLIAMSON, EUGENE WOLF
Contributors of listings and/or commentaries are indicated by their initials. D = DIRECTOR

NOW PLAYING ON A VCR NEAR YOU

Resources: *Leonard Maltin's TV MOVIES AND VIDEO GUIDE, 1991 EDITION*, Signet, 1990, New York.
"Appalachian Film List" by Laura Schuster and Sharyn McCrumb, *Appalachian Journal*, Summer 1984 (V11, No. 4), Boone, N.C.

Dickey. Degenerate Inbred Hillbillies vs. Male Bonding City Slickers. Story of canoe trip/ nightmare down the Chattooga River in Northern Georgia is still the greatest incentive for many non-Southerners to stay on the interstate. Dickey adapted his novel and also plays the sheriff. "Dueling Banjos" became the anthem of Appalachian mayhem. Final Score: Hillbillies - 0. (SB)

The Dollmaker

1984 Made for TV. D: Daniel Petrie. Jane Fonda, Levon Helm, Amanda Plummer, Susan Kingsley, Geraldine Page. Adapted from Harriette Arnow's 1953 masterpiece of a novel. An Eastern Kentucky woman, who is a woodcarver, and her family are uprooted and forced to endure big-city terrors and prejudices of World War II Detroit. Hollywood adds a happy ending to dilute the novel's final bleak imagery. Fonda won an Emmy in her TV movie debut, but Arnow said she hated being "ridden to fame on Jane Fonda's coattails." (SB)

The Electric Valley

1983 D: Ross Spears. A documentary of the turbulent history of the dam-building, power generating Tennessee Valley Authority showing the agency from its Depression-era beginnings in 1933 to the present, from perceptions of it as the source of progress and prosperity to equally compelling perceptions of it as a land ravaging nuclear megalomaniac and heartless bureaucracy. Music composed by Kenton Coe and a song by *Now and Then* music editor Ed Snodderly.

The Evil Dead

1983 D: Sam Raimi. Bruce Campbell, Ellen Sandweiss. On location in East Tennessee near Morristown and in studio sets in Detroit, this movie imagines the Southern mountains as supercharged with an active human-hating evil. Trees and vines reach out to grab and violate a young woman, who becomes a flesh-chomping ghoul who infects others of her group. They end up hacking, stabbing, lacerating, chewing and chain sawing one another to death during a single night in a mountain cabin. (JW) This movie, made by precocious college students might be the grossest horror film ever. (LM)

The Evil Dead II

1986 D: Sam Raimi. Bruce Campbell, Sarah Berry. The sequel to *The Evil Dead*, in which pretty much ditto, but with much more hilarity at the idea of it all, on location this time partly in Anson County, N.C . (JW)

Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archives.

Top: Paul Newman and Lolita Davidovich in *Blaze*. Based on the book *Blaze Starr: My Life as Told to Huey Perry*.

Above: Ned Beatty, Burt Reynolds, Jon Voight and Ronny Cox in *Deliverance*.

Feudin' Fools

1952 D: William Beaudine. Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall, Dorothy Ford, Lyle Talbot, Benny Baker, Russell Simpson. One of the Bowery Boys' broad comedies where our heroes come from New York and get mixed up in a mountain feud.

Fools' Parade

1971 D: Andrew V. McLaglen. James Stewart, George Kennedy, Anne Baxter, Kurt Russell. Filmed on location in Moundsville, W.Va. Based on Davis Grubb novel, story of three ex-cons pursued by their old prison guard is unintentionally funny. (LM)

Foxfire

1987 TV Movie. D: Jud Taylor. Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronyn, John Denver. Adaptation of Broadway play by Cronyn and Susan Cooper about a widow who will not leave her mountain home where she talks with her husband's ghost. Tandy won an Emmy (and had won a Tony on Broadway for the same part).

The Georgia Peaches

1980 TV Movie. D: Daniel Haller. Tanya Tucker, Terri Nunn, Lane Smith, Sally Kirkland. A country singer, her sister who runs the family auto-repair shop and their moonshine-running pal help the government catch a crook. Produced by B-Movie King Roger Corman.

Goodbye Miss Fourth of July

1988 TV Movie. D: George Miller. Louis Gossett, Jr., Chris Sarandon, Roxana Zal, Chantal Contouri, Chynna Phillips, Mitchell Anderson, Conchata Ferrell, Ed Lauter. The daughter of a Greek immigrant comes of age in West Virginia pre-World War I, based on true story. Filmed by Disney in Jonesborough, Tenn.

Hand Carved

1981 D: Herb E. Smith. A documentary about an Eastern Kentucky chairmaker, Chester Cornett, from Appalshop.

Hard Choices

1986 D: Rick King. Margaret Klenck, John Sayles, Spalding Gray. Based on a true incident in Greene County, Tenn., of a teenager in trouble befriended by a troubled social worker. John Sayles plays the villain. (CW)

Harlan County USA

1977 D: Barbara Kopple. Academy Award winning documentary about a bitter coal mine strike against Eastover Mining Company, a subsidiary of Duke Power. Which side are you on?

The Hatfields and the McCoys

1975 TV Movie. D: Clyde Ware. Jack Palance. Story of the mountains' most famous feud directed by a West Virginian.

Hillbillys in a Haunted House

1967 D: Jean Yarbrough. Ferlin Husky, Lon Chaney, Jr., Basil Rathbone, Merle Haggard. Dopey follow-up to dopey*Las Vegas Hillbillys*.

The Homecoming: A Christmas Story

1971 TV Movie. D: Fielder Cook. Patricia Neal, Edgar Bergen, Ellen Corby, Andrew Duggan, Cleavon Little, Richard Thomas. Thus *The Waltons* was begat. Earl Hamner, Jr., wrote the teleplay based on his book (which had also been the basis of the 1963 *Spencer's Mountain*, the story of a Wyoming family starring Henry Fonda and Maureen O'Hara).

I'd Climb the Highest Mountain

1951 D: Henry King. Susan Hayward, William Lundigan, Rory Calhoun, Barbara Bates, Gene Lockhart. Turn of the century story of Methodist

minister and his wife who move to the hills of North Georgia. Touching.

I Walk the Line

1970 D: John Frankenheimer. Gregory Peck, Tuesday Weld, Estelle Parsons, Ralph Meeker. Five Johnny Cash songs enhance the story of a Tennessee mountain sheriff who falls for a moonshiner's daughter.

Incredible Journey of Doctor Meg Laurel

1979 Made for TV. D: Guy Green. Lindsay Wagner, Jane Wyman, Dorothy McGuire, Gary Lockwood, James Woods. Doctor brings modern medicine to her kinfolk in Appalachia of the 1930s and runs afoul of the local medicine woman (Jane Wyman!). (LM)

Judge Priest

1934 D: John Ford. Will Rogers, Stepin Fetchit, Hattie McDaniel. Small-town Kentucky judge dispenses wisdom to adorable characters.

Kentucky Moonshine

1938 D: David Butler. Tony Martin, Marjorie Weaver, Ritz Brothers, Slim Summerville, John Carradine. Ritz Brothers cause chaos amidst feuding hillbillies with love/musical interest provided by Martin and Weaver.

Kentucky Woman

1983 Made for TV. D: Walter Doniger. Cheryl Ladd, Ned Beatty. Charlie's Angel doesn't make enough money to support her son and father (who has black lung), so she turns to coal mining, but everyone stays clean and pretty. (DR)

Kissin' Cousins

1967 D: Gene Nelson. Elvis Presley plays Josh, a military officer, *and* his sullen mountain cousin, Jody. Set mainly in Ole Smokey, Tenn., where the U.S. military, represented by Josh, wants to put a missile base. Uncle Sam must contend with the moonshining, land-loving Tatum clan and the scantily clad Kittyhawks, "dang men-starved critters." (SB)

The Last American Hero

1973 D: Lamont Johnson. Jeff Bridges, Valerie Perrine, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Art Lund, Gary Busey, Ed Laughter, Ned Beatty. The fictionalized bio of Junior Johnson of Western North Carolina who made moonshine running into a sport, becoming the unofficial father of stock car racing.

Las Vegas Hillbillys

1966 D: Arthur C. Pierce. Ferlin Husky, Jayne Mansfield. How does country hick Husky become a big-time Las Vegas entrepreneur? You really don't want to know. (LM)

Li'l Abner

1959 D: Melvin Frank. Peter Palmer, Leslie Parrish, Stubby Kaye, Julie Newmar, Stella Stevens. Movie of Broadway musical by Gene DePaul and Johnny Mercer, based on Al Capp's comic strip about the mythical hillbilly village, Dogpatch. A corny caricature.

Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come

1961 D: Andrew V. McLaglen. Jimmy Rodgers, Luanna Patten, Chill Wills. Dull rendition of John Fox, Jr., novel of union soldier who returns to mountains after war.

Lolly Madonna XXX

1973 D: Richard C. Sarafian. Rod Steiger, Robert Ryan, Jeff Bridges. Latter-day Hatfield-McCoy story set in East Tennessee. One of the final fiascos that sank the old MGM studios, an attempt to cash in on the popularity of hillbillies following the success of *Deliverance*, but with more depravity, more violence, more weirdness and more inbred stupidity per frame than practically any movie made before or after it. (JW) Guilty pleasure. (CW)

Ma and Pa Kettle

1949-1956 (series) Marjorie Main. Percy Kilbride. *The Egg and I*, Betty MacDonald's bestselling novel, which was made into a popular movie starring Claudette Colbert and Fred MacMurray in 1947, introduced Marjorie Main and Percy Kilbride as Ma and Pa Kettle, a resourceful farm wife, a lazy husband, their 13 children and their ramshackle farm. A series of nine Ma and Pa Kettle movies followed, all low-budget productions filmed in black and white, and all popular. Though *The Egg and I* places the Kettles in Washington State, the family presented a ubiquitous caricature of the benign white trash mountain family, ignorant of birth control and of city ways, and usually resourceful and crafty when necessary. (SB)

Matewan

1987 D: John Sayles. Chris Cooper, Will Oldham, Mary McDonnell, Bob Gunton, James Earl Jones, Josh Mostel, Joe Grifasi, Kevin Tighe, Maggie Renzi, David Strathairn, Frankie Taylor. Richly textured look at the struggle of exploited miners, portrayed with sympathy and dignity (maybe even a little too righteously), culminating in the Matewan Massacre in 1920 Mingo County, W.Va. Meticulously researched and filmed in West Virginia. Haskell Wexler was nominated for an Oscar for cinematography. The best dramatic film about Appalachians' and their struggles. (CW)

Moonrunners

1974 D: Gy Waldron. James Mitchum, Kiel Martin, Waylon Jennings. Son of Luke Doolin, so to speak (see *Thunder Road* listing), a modern-day bootlegger inherits his father's mantle, saves a damsel in distress, and fights for his lifestyle against the twin threats to freedom, the Law and the Mob. The TV series *Dukes of Hazzard* was a spinoff. (JW)

Moonshine County Express

1977 D: Gus Trikonis. John Saxon, Susan Howard, Jeff Corey. Like *Moonrunners*, only with *three* damsels in distress. (JW)

The Moonshine War

1970 D: Richard Quine. Richard Widmark, Alan Alda, Patrick McGoohan. Set in Kentucky, yet another saga of irrascible 'shiners and mean ol' revenuers. Elmore Leonard adapted the script from his novel. Alda probably wishes he could locate every single copy of this film. (SB)

Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art

Above: Bill Paxton, Patrick Swayze and Liam Neeson as brothers in *Next of Kin*.

Right: Robert Mitchum in *Night of the Hunter*.

Next of Kin
1989 D: John Irvin. Patrick Swayze, Liam Neeson, Adam Baldwin, Michael J. Pollard. Swayze, a Chicago cop formerly of Eastern Kentucky, and his redneck cousins dispense some mountain justice on Mafia thugs after Swayze's little brother is murdered. Hatchets, bows and arrows figure in the defeat of the Mafia. One snake-handling cousin carries a tropical boa. Swayze is married to a concert violinist! He's more out-of-place as a hillbilly than Diane Keaton was as a cracker in *Crimes of the Heart*. (SB)

Night of the Hunter
1955 D: Charles Laughton. Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters, Lillian Gish, Peter Graves. Chilling story of psychotic preacher chasing two homeless children. James Agee's fine adaptation of Davis Grubb novel, which was set in the Ohio River Valley. Laughton's only directing effort. Listed as "one of the 100 greatest American films" by American Film Institute.

No Drums, No Bugles
1971 D: Clyde Ware. Martin Sheen. Based on West Virginia legend about a conscientious objector during the Civl War who spends three years in a cave rather than fight. Directed by a West Virginia native.

No Time for Sergeants
1958 D: Mervyn LeRoy. Andy Griffith, Don Knotts. A dirt-dumb but nevertheless sweet-natured hillbilly fool gets drafted into the Army. The hapless draftee cleans the latrine and rigs all the toilet seats to salute at once.

Pumpkinhead
1988 D: Staf Winston. Lance Henriksen, Jeff East. Lowbrow (but not low budget) horror film, using dry California hills and drippy studio sets to imagine the Southern mountains in which a drippy hillbilly witch releases vengeful pumpkin-patch demon on callous city teenagers, surfer-type boys swaggering onto the mountain landscape to ride motor bikes up hill and down holler, until one of them accidentally kills a mountain boy, which calls up the revenge of Pumpkinhead. (JW) Not to be confused with the Peanuts Halloween special. (SB)

Red Fox/Second Hangin'
1984 D: Don Baker. Roadside Theater's play based on true events along the border of Virginia and Kentucky shortly after the Civil War; Doc Taylor, "The Red Fox of the Cumberlands," a doctor, preacher, U.S. Marshall and the second man hanged in Wise County, Va.

The River
1984 D: Mark Rydell. Sissy Spacek, Mel Gibson. In their struggle to keep the farm, somehow the family keeps their heads above water. Though filmed in East Tennessee, the locale is so homogenized, you'd never know; it's Anywhere, U.S.A. Family devotion to beleaguered bottomland makes Scarlett's attachment to Tara seem quaint. (CW+SB)

Sergeant York
1941 D: Howard Hawks. Gary Cooper, Walter Brennan, Joan Leslie, George Tobias, Stanley Ridges, Margaret Whycherly, Ward Bond, Noah Beery, Jr., June Lockhart. Biography of the greatest hero of World War I, Alvin C. York, of Fentress County, Tenn., a conscientious objector who became convinced of the rightness of the war and used his mountaineer skills to capture 131 Germans singlehandedly. A modest and religious man, York refused to cash in on his fame, returning to his home on the Cumberland. Cooper won an Oscar for his role in this reasonably accurate rendition of York's life.

Silence of the Lambs
1991 D: Jonathan Demme. Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins, Scott Glenn. Foster is quietly astonishing as an FBI trainee from Clay County, W.V., succeeding in a world of G-men and urban psychos, and her mountain accent is more believable than most. Demme's use of authentic locations lends credibility to an otherwise pulpy plot. (CW)

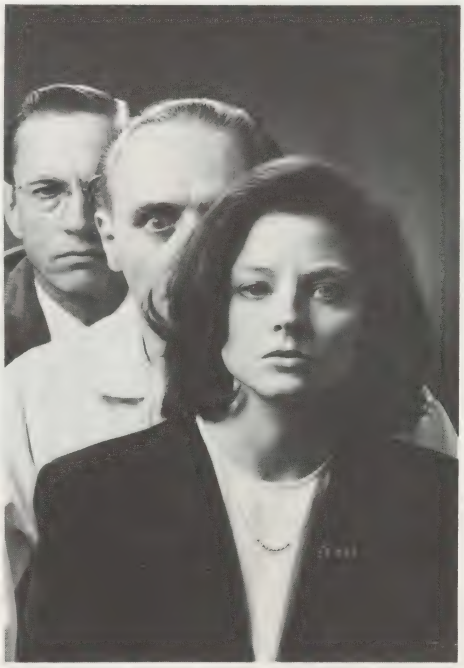
Stark Love
1927 D: Karl Brown. Helen Munday, Forrest James, Silas Miracle. Filmed on location in North Carolina with local people acting the story of a young mountain woman being forced to marry the father of her sweetheart.

Stars and Bars
1988 D: Pat O'Connor. Daniel Day-Lewis, Harry Dean Stanton, Martha Plimpton, Joan Cusack, Spalding Gray, Rockets Redglare. A pooh-bearish English gentleman comes to Manhattan to learn to be American and must go inexplicably (but logically, if you've been paying attention) to hillbillyland in Georgia to acquire a valuable lost Renoir. There he meets a family of weirded-out hicks, "like the *Deliverance* cast in a party mood," said critic Rita Kempley. After a sufficient dunking below the poverty line, the plot, along with the English gentleman, returns to the city. (JW)

Taming Sutton's Gal
1957 D: Lesley Selander. John Lupton, Gloria Talbott, Jack Kelly. The amorous adventures of a moonshiner's wife. Oh, please.

Thunder Road
1958 D: Arthur Ripley. Robert Mitchum, Gene Barry, James Mitchum. Luke Doolin, the moonshine runner, helps his father, respects his mother, protects his younger brother, is chivalrous to women and hard on cads. Plus he has served his country in Korea. He takes on the Mafia *and* the Feds. A late show, hot rod classic; Blazing Vehicle! Robert Mitchum wrote and starred; his son Jim made his screen debut as Luke's younger brother.(JW+SB)

Tol'able David
1921 D: Henry King. Richard Barthelmess, Gladys Hulette, Ernest Torrence, Warner Richmond. A silent picture, one of the first on-location films ever made, in which a young backwoods boy protects his girlfriend from three convicts who come to town.



Courtesy of Cathy Whaley

Above: Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins and Scott Glenn (front to rear) in *Silence of the Lambs*.

Left: Becky Jo Lynch and Sissy Spacek nurse the family cow, Jessica, in *The River*. (The cow was named in retribution for Jessica Lange leaving this project to produce her own save-the-farm film, *Country*). Becky Jo says, "Is Jessica dead?" Sissy says, "I'm sorry. I tried."

TV Shows About Appalachia

Andy Griffith

CBS 10/60 - 9/68 Andy Griffith, Ron Howard, Don Knotts, Francis Bavier. Hillbillies appear infrequently as comic nuisances in the guises of the superstitious, musical Darling family (aided by the professional bluegrass band The Dillards) and rock-throwing poet savant, Ernest T. Bass ("It's me, it's me, it's Ernest T.") (SB+TF)

The Beverly Hillbillies

CBS 9/62 - 9/71 Buddy Ebsen, Irene Ryan, Donna Douglas, Max Baer, Jr., Raymond Bailey, Nancy Culp. Comic innocents in the American Babylon. Probably the most durable and recognizable of mountaineer caricatures.

Daniel Boone

NBC 9/64 - 9/70 Fess Parker, Patricia Blair, Ed Ames. Set in Boonesborough, Ky., in the late 18th century. Ames plays the Oxford-educated Cherokee, Mingo. The Cherokee, of course, never lived in teepees or sported Sioux haircuts. And as a 1976 *Cherokee One Feather* article notes, Mingo speaks a "language that sounds more like Chinese" than Cherokee. With Fess Parker as both Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone, it is no wonder these personalities are often confused. See the movie listings for more information.

Dukes of Hazzard

CBS 1/79 - 8/85 John Schneider, Tom Wopat, Denver Pyle, Catherine Bach. Mayberry's Brisco Darling (Denver Pyle) co-stars in this cheesy exploitation with the dustiest roads, the fastest cars, the fullest halter tops, and the cleanest-cut hillbilly hot rodders in prime time history. Roadrunner cartoons are more believable. (SB+TF)

Gomer Pyle

CBS 9/64 - 9/69 Jim Nabors, Frank Sutton. Spinoff from *The Andy Griffith Show*. Proved you can take the small town boy out of Mayberry (in the N.C. Piedmont, not the mountains), but you can't get the "gollee, Shazam" out of the Marine. (SB+TF)

Hee Haw

CBS (TNN) 6/69 - present. Buck Owens, Roy Clark, Archie Campbell, Mixes Nashville music and hayseed humor. A perennial, corn-fed parody of itself. Stereotypes are used for humor and are too obvious to be degrading. Unfortunately concepts of Tennesseans are formed after seeing this show. (DR)

The Waltons

CBS 9/72 - 9/81 Michael Learned, Ralph Waitt, Richard Thomas, Will Geer, Ellen Corby, Judy Norton, David S. Harper, Kami Colter, Jon Walmsley, Mary Elizabeth McDonough, Eric Scott. Sentimental, Depression-era hillbilly family whose love and selflessness pulls them through the toughest challenges, like John Boy's frequent bouts of writer's block. Based on the childhood of creator Earl Hamner, Jr., the series was set in fictional Jefferson County near Charlottesville, Va., and Hamner's hometown of Schuyler. (SB+TF)

◄ ***Tol'able David*, 1921.**

Trail of the Lonesome Pine

1936 D: Henry Hathaway. Sylvia Sidney, Henry Fonda, Fred MacMurray, Fred Stone, Fuzzy Knight, Beulah Bondi, Spanky McFarland, Nigel Bruce. From John Fox, Jr., novel of feuding families and what happens when the railroad is built on their land. First outdoor film ever made in Technicolor.

Walk in the Spring Rain

1970 D: Guy Green. Anthony Quinn, Ingrid Bergman. Extramarital affair between mountain man and big city woman filmed in Cade's Cove near Gatlinburg, Tenn. Written and produced by Stirling Silliphant, based on the book by Rachel Maddux. (RB)

Where the Lilies Bloom

1974 D: William A. Graham. Julie Gholson, Jan Smithers, Matthew Burril, Helen Harmon, Harry Dean Stanton, Rance Howard, Sudie Bond. Filmed on location in North Carolina. The four orphaned Luther children show initiative, independence and pride taking care of themselves and keeping the news of their father's death a secret so they won't be taken away by the state. Based on the novel by Bill and Vera Cleaver with a screenplay by Earl Hamner, Jr. Not as cloying as *The Waltons*, an underrated and rewarding drama. (SB)

Wild River

1960 D: Elia Kazan. Montgomery Clift, Lee Remick, Jo Van Fleet, Albert Salmi, Bruce Dern (in his film debut). Clift, working as a Tennessee Valley Authority official, tries to convince a dignified grandmother to sell her property, which will be flooded in any case, for a dam project in 1930s Tennessee, and he falls in love with granddaughter Remick. Grandma's death is the price to pay for progress, but there's a happy ending. Go figure.

Winter People

1989 D: Ted Kotcheff. Kelly McGillis, Kurt Russell. Based on John Ehle's novel and filmed in Avery County, N.C. Two feudin' mountain families learn sacrifice and forgiveness when a cultivated clockmaker settles in their midst. Soon he leaps onto the back of a giant bear and blows its brains out, and he will eventually do mortal combat with another man, his rival for the mountain woman. Lesson: it's good medicine for an urban man's gonads to go to the heart of chaos. (JW)

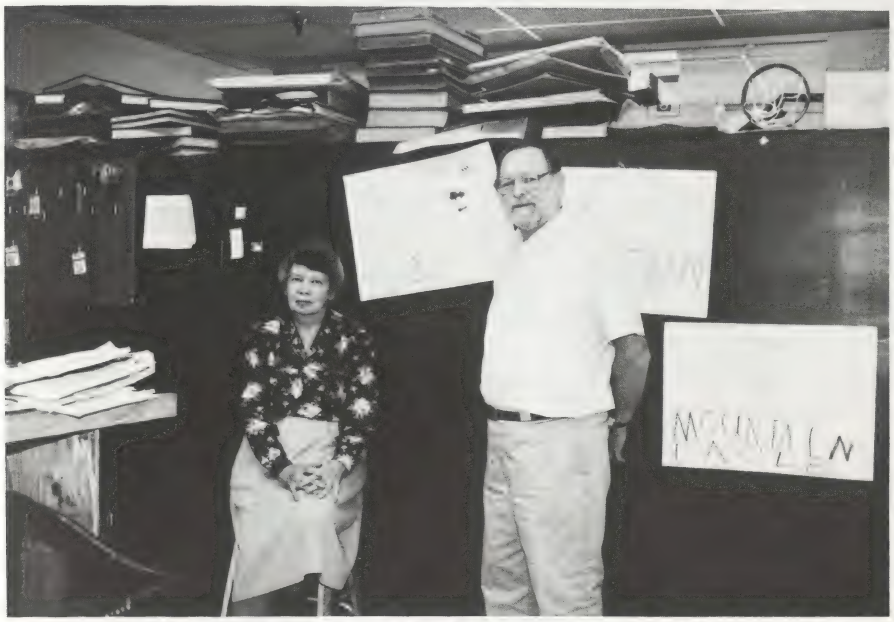
Now and Then
Notes on Appalachian Movies

Most Frequent Themes: Moonshining, Feudin'.
Also Frequently Covered: Coal Mining, Fast Automobiles, Monsters, Frontier Days.
Most Frequently Appearing Actors: Ned Beatty, Levon Helm, Sissy Spacek, Robert Mitchum, Harry Dean Stanton.
Most Disputes by Now and Then Contributers on Value: *Winter People*
"Respectable adaptation of John Ehle's novel." (SB)
"Chilly. Kelly McGillis is no Sissy Spacek ." (CW)
"Turgid tale."(LM)
Dictionary Abuse: *Hillbillys in a Haunted House* and *Las Vegas Hillbillys*.
Most *Now & Then* Symbols (Coonskin caps, moonshine jugs, etc.): *Deliverance* (11), *Pumpkinhead* (9).
Appalachian Screen Biographies by Profession: Stripper, Singer, Race Car Driver, Pilot, War Hero.

by Pat Arnow

IT SCREAMS!

The Mountain Eagle
Ruffling feathers



Tom and Pat Gish at the office of the *Mountain Eagle* in Whitesburg, Ky.

*At first glance **The Mountain Eagle** in Whitesburg, Ky., looks like any small-town weekly newspaper. It's got news of crimes, sports, births and deaths. Area columnists report on visits of families, illnesses and garden conditions. There are recipes, TV listings, fashion and health news.*

*But this Eastern Kentucky paper has qualities that raise it to a distinctive level. National columnists including Ralph Nader and Colman McCarthy and articles from press services such as the Pacific News Service analyze national and international issues. The best feature may be "Speak Your Piece," in which comments are printed from anonymous callers who leave messages about anything on the **Eagle's** answering machine.*

*But it's the **Eagle's** courage in delving into local issues in Eastern Kentucky that really sets this paper apart. Though faced with threats to its very existence, the **Eagle** has never backed away from in-depth coverage of controversial local and regional problems.*

Tom Gish, the editor and publisher of *The Mountain Eagle*, doesn't remember the exact order of events very well. His weekly won the John Peter Zenger Award on behalf of freedom of the press the year after the *Washington Post* got it for investigative reporting of the Watergate scandal (which brought down Nixon's presidency) and the year before the *New York Times* got it for the Pentagon Papers. "Not bad company," he comments. "Must have been 1974." That was also the year arsonists destroyed *Eagle* offices.

But the paper was getting into trouble long before getting burned down for their outspoken ways.

Gish, a soft-spoken man with a trimmed white beard, isn't sure which controversy was the *Eagle's* very first. He calls out to his wife of 43 years (he does remember that number without hesitation) "Hey, Pat, what issue did we first get in trouble on? The library? The hospitals?" She is the one who remembers the dates, he says.

A moment later a down-to-earth white-haired woman appears in the doorway of Gish's paper-strewn office. "It was the county library," she says, leaning on the door frame, looking amused.

As they reminisce about their early days in Whitesburg, Ky.,—the threats, the harassment—they speak good-humoredly, in almost fond tones. When they took over a weekly newspaper in Letcher County in 1957, the controversies started almost immediately, and the *Eagle*, true to its masthead, started screaming.

"It Screams," the slogan under the picture of the eagle was not placed there as an announcement of strong stands to come. Its origin was more innocent, Gish claims. "When we purchased the *Eagle*, Pat's aunt in Lexington identified it as the paper that screams. She came here to teach in an early year and remembered." The Gishes liked the slogan, so they adopted it. Whether they intended it or not, the *Eagle* had found its voice, and it was an insistent one.

What the Gishes say they had in mind for the small-town newspaper was simply reporting on events in the manner in which they had been trained. They had worked on the student paper, *The Kernel*, at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, where they were fellow students. (They met in a Spanish class, and Tom's interest in Pat, who was interested in journalism, led him to the paper.) After graduation Pat worked as a reporter for Lexington Leader. Tom covered the statehouse in Frankfort as a correspondent for United Press International.

After more than 10 years at the capitol, Tom Gish felt overworked and bored. "The Kentucky legislature had met in regular and in special emergency sessions almost continuously, it seems to me, for a decade. It just went on and on and on and on. It really ground everybody down. To this day I can't go in the legislature without groaning."

On a visit to Tom's hometown of Whitesburg, the couple ran into the

owners of two Eastern Kentucky newspapers, *The Mountain Eagle* and *The Hazard Herald.* "They told us that they were having a hard time getting out both newspapers and that we ought to buy one of them and come up to run it, and I said OK." He laughs. "Just about with that much thought."

. . . from *The Mountain Eagle*

Beginning in 1907 and for some 20 years, *The Mountain Eagle* was run by its founder, Neamiah Webb. "It was a pretty good paper under Webb," says Tom Gish. "Probably much more a community booster, industry supporter than it has been with me around."

When the Depression came, the paper went through a series of bankruptcies and changes in ownership. "It had not been much of a paper for some years after Webb left. It was good some years, bad some other years depending on who was running it. That's true of most small-town newspapers. At the time we bought it, it was mostly luncheon club minutes and very long obituaries and news releases from government agencies."

At first the Gishes received a good reception upon moving to Eastern Kentucky to run the newspaper. "I had gone to school in Whitesburg. I had some old friends." Tom Gish's parents came from Western Kentucky in 1917 with the development of the coalfields. Gish's father worked for Southeast Coal Company for some 50 years. "He was quite a figure in the coal industry. He, among other things, developed, but did not patent, the roof bolt. My family was pretty well known."

"Juanita Fields killed a copperhead on her porch at Millstone last week . . . "
Grace Caudill, Blackey

Tom and Pat Gish began the business of reporting the news. "We set about going to routine (governmental) meetings and found to our total surprise—and it really was a surprise—that we were not welcome," says Gish.

"We had to spend much of the first decade of being here reinventing the whole concept of freedom of the press and the right to observe and quote and report. Nobody'd ever covered government by actually going to a meeting and quoting the board members, quoting the audience, simply giving a factual accounting of what took place," he laughs.

"The reaction was pretty severe. In the instance of fiscal court, they would literally—*literally*—pass resolutions saying that the paper could not come to meetings."

The repercussions from reporting area news were many. Various offended parties would withhold advertising or take away work from a job printing operation that was part of the business at that time. There was a coal company official who "went around the community assuring everybody that we were a bunch of communists, that they should never spend a dime on the *Eagle* and should cancel their subscriptions."

"I have little confidence in either of the candidates running for Governor this fall but . . . I'll trot down to the firehouse and vote for Larry Hopkins . . . I actually believe that he would like to be an honest leader. . . He's naive. I doubt that he's competent. He swaggers too much and he pals around too much with Bush and Quayle to suit me, but for crying out loud, he's pretty damned harmless when you start thinking about grabbing power and abusing it the way that we're used to."
Ike Adams, Points East

The problems of reporting became even more complicated "when we got serious about regional economic issues." The Gishes had moved to Eastern Kentucky the year of a massive flood on the Kentucky River. "I think the assumption was that it was all caused by the flood, and when we got that straightened out, why, everything would be all right. But actually, it wasn't so much flood damage that had done in all the businesses as it was just plain old unemployment and sick economic and social conditions."

When the *Eagle* advocated "public power," a TVA-like approach, in the early discussions of Appalachian economy, "It was not overwhelmingly popular with the private utilities," Gish laughs. "And all at once there is a *new* newspaper in the community with, strangely enough, four or five pages of Kentucky Power advertising. It's been here ever since."

"I agree with the caller who made the statement that we need two new principals and a new guidance counselor at Letcher School. The prinicpals have lost touch with the parents . . . "
Speak Your Piece

The *Eagle* endured other affronts to its revenues, too. Kentucky law provides that official notices such as an intent to mine go into the local paper with the largest paid circulation. But periodically, the official notices go into the other Whitesburg paper, even though the paid circulation is only about 20 percent of the *Eagle*'s. "We've been in and out of court two or three times on that. There is an existing circuit court injunction saying they can't do it. But the courts and the school board, when they get angry with us, they'll—still, to this day—try to take away advertising and put it in the other paper."

Gish understates the reasons for the Eagle's problems: "Most people that hold power don't welcome change very much." He enjoys the ironies. "I don't think they're trivial issues, but you look back and recognize that you were virtually ridden out of town on a rail because of things like whether you should or shouldn't have a county library."

Except for a few court injunctions, the Gishes won their fights for openness with the help of readers. "The most effective thing you can do is to appeal to Letcher County people to talk to their council members, talk to their mayor or talk to their judge, to tell them that we have a right to know. That works.

"I don't want to imply for a moment that we don't have support. Our problems have always been within the 10 percent of the county that represents the establishment. We've

always had good circulation and good readership and good support, even in our darkest moments."

The *Eagle* is widely read. It goes to 6,000 of the county's 9,000 households. Mail subscriptions total 2,700, many sent to former residents of the county who live in all 50 states. (Other subscribers include media people and more than 40 libraries.)

One of the community columnists for the *Eagle*, Mabel Kiser, who died in her 70s, told Gish that the two things she found in every Letcher County home were the Bible and the *Eagle*. "That shapes and changes your responsibility," Gish says. He believes that because of the *Eagle* there is "a much more aware population than most other counties. The counties in which there is no controversy are ones in which there is no reporting. We're not a center of trouble; we're a center of progress," he believes.

In the early 1970s, the controversies came from stands on mining and on local police. The consequences were devastating to the *Eagle*. The mine operators did not like what the newspaper was saying about strip mining. "The *Eagle* was probably the first paper to get into the issue from the standpoint of the landowner (the people whose land was being stripped because they did not own mineral rights). It almost got to be a state of war every now and then."

The police were angry because *The Mountain Eagle* was reporting on the harassment of teenagers who liked to hang out by the bridge in town. One of the kids was the Gishes' son Ben (who is now 34 and the managing editor of the paper), who was arrested for playing a tape in his car too loudly. The harassment took a deadly turn when four area teens were killed in a high-speed police chase. The paper questioned the necessity of the police action.

Tom Gish is still not sure which issue brought about the blaze in the *Eagle* office on the night of August 1, 1974. Much of the operation was destroyed (approximately $17,000 in damages), but the Gishes and their landlord decided that the building was structurally sound. The family cleared away the debris and started preparing an edition. But, as the *New York Times* reported it, "Mr. Gish was putting together an A. & P. advertisement when the police chief tacked up some signs in the building saying it was condemned. Mr. Gish and his screaming *Eagle* would have to get out."

About a week after the fire, Gish found some kerosene-soaked papers by the back door and turned them over to officials (who had earlier done a prefunctory search and found "nothing conclusive"). Investigators barked up a strange tree. They gave Ben Gish a lie detector test, asking him if he had set the fire.

"I think the best driver and the best-looking driver that ever drove at Mountain Motor Speedway drives car No. 72. Man is he a hunk."
Speak Your Piece

Finally, in October, acting on a tip, police arrested a Whitesburg policeman who had resigned from the force a few days before the fire. The 25-year-old Johnny Dwight Caudill had said that attacks on him by *The Mountain Eagle* had led to his resignation. Two young men who had been offered payment to set the fire were also arrested.

Caudill received a one-year sentence but got probation. The *New York Times* reported "that the favorable probation report on Mr. Caudill had described the defendant as 'a victim of circumstances'—an apparent reference to the unpopularity of the newspaper in some influential circles here." Caudill's two accomplices were fined $300 each.

"Many Americans fear what they see happening in this country, as hallowed individual freedoms are trampled one by one, in the name of law and order, in the name of fighting drugs, in the name of protecting credit card firms from deadbeats . . . "
Editorial

Though the circumstances were difficult, with the Gishes producing an abbreviated version of the paper from their home for a time, there was no talk of giving up. The slogan by the picture of the *Eagle* became, "It still screams."

The *Eagle* offices are now in a small shopping center, in a storefront that used to be a hardware store. The office is spacious, 4,000 square feet, with fluorescent tube lighting and a linoleum floor. There are four Macintosh computers and tables for layout. In another room the AP wire makes the only noise in the building.

The place is a mess. The large amount of empty floor space just keeps it from being a closed-in mess. Paper, boxes and the detritus of newspaper life lies where it has landed, with slipping stacks of newspapers on the floor in front of shelves crammed full. The only art on the walls is by a granddaughter who draws new pictures for each season and holiday, and there is a simple smiling portrait labeled "Tom" taped to the front of Gish's desk.

All of the Gishes' five children "were raised in the paper because we've spent ungodly hours." says Gish. And all learned the skills of putting together a weekly. Only Ben has opted to stay. And son-in-law Freddy Oakes is the advertising manager. Freddy's wife Sarah teaches kindergarten in nearby Kona. They have two children, Sally, the fourth-grader whose pictures provide the *Eagle's* decorations, and Tommy, a sixth-grader.

Ann, the eldest Gish daughter is a social worker in Wise County, Va. Kitty, the youngest daughter, recently graduated from medical school and plans to come back to Eastern Kentucky after her training. Ray, the youngest son, works for Greenpeace in San Francisco.

The only other *Eagle* staff member is reporter Sam Adams. It's a thriving small business, one of the few papers that pays for itself through subscriptions, says

Continued on Page 30

I know my megahurts
how bout yours?

Old Angseye aty
First homicide of the New Year
details at eleven!

— *Bob Henry Baber*

Appalshop

The Maturing of a '60s Idea

Pat Arnow

Appalshop came into being in 1969 as a film workshop for coalfield youth of Whitesburg, Ky. Unlike Broadside Television (see page 3) and other ill-fated alternative media ventures of the 1970s, Appalshop survived and grew. Today they produce films and a television series (*Headwaters*). They oversee a record label (June Appal), a theater company (Roadside), educational programs in Eastern Kentucky classrooms and a community radio station, WMMT. With a staff of 34 and a budget of more than a million dollars a year from grants and earned income, the Appalshop collective enjoys good health. "They're not hanging on by their fingernails," says one frequent visitor to their two-story headquarters in Whitesburg.

Appalshop has become one of the most interesting experiments in media in the U.S., and one of the most enduring. I talked with some of the members of the media collective to see if I could determine the secret of their success.

Have you hugged your home today?

Herb E. Smith

It's one of Appalshop's first movies: Three fellows go to the town's pool. One of them, Randy, is there to see a girl he likes, the lifeguard. He doesn't have a car, and she's tired of seeing him only when his friends can provide rides. A friend offers to sell him a car. He can find a job and save for college in the fall or he can work in a coal mine for better pay and buy the car. But he can't do both. The mines don't want to train someone only to lose him after the summer.

Randy and his friends visit the mine entrance and talk with the miners at the end of a shift. This dialogue, probably from documentary footage, ensues:

"How long you worked in a mine?"

"Twenty-five years."

"Straight?"

"Yeah. Don't know nothing else."

"Pretty good money?"

"We get paid for our work. . . Once you get started, you've got to work on. It gets in ya blood."

The boy takes a walk to a creek, removes his shoes and splashes across. Then he's riding with his friends again through the steep hillsides. "I'll take the car," he says.

Herb E. Smith, the 17-year-old coal miner's son who directed, wrote, acted the main part and edited the 20-minute ***In Ya Blood,*** *somehow knew to tell a story about something he knew well and how to illustrate a pivotal decision.*

Herb E. Smith and chair made by Chester Cornett for Smith's 1981 documentary *Handcarved.*

When Smith graduated from high school earlier that year, half his class left the mountains because there were no jobs. He had never thought he could stay in Eastern Kentucky either. But working for a film project, a War on Poverty program, changed him. He went all over the area filming interviews with people. He discovered his home; he saw the value of it.

The summer he made ***In Ya Blood****, Smith made his own pivotal decision. When he went to Vanderbilt University in the fall, his face was turned resolutely back to Eastern Kentucky. After he finished college, he would return home.*

Twenty years later, Herb E. Smith sits on the comfortable sofas at Appalshop, behind him a large window with a view of the Eastern Kentucky mountains. His dark hair is longish, and he has a big droopy signature mustache. Like the other members of the Appalshop staff, his clothes are easygoing: jeans, t-shirt and work boots. He has stayed with Appalshop, the organization that the workshop evolved into. ***In Ya Blood*** *remains his only dramatic film, but he has made a dozen documentaries, including* ***Strangers & Kin: a History of the Hillbilly Image*** *and* ***Harriette Simpson Arnow: 1908-1986****, a portrait of one of Appalachia's foremost novelists. Some of Smith's work has won national and international awards.*

He talked about staying in a place.

"The program was to leave. That was expected of us. There was a mass exodus. In those days this place looked a lot different. The whole place had been through 20 years of deep economic problems. People hungry. I remember beggars on the street. Previous to food stamps it was hard for a lot of people to piece together enough to live on. It was hard times here, and a lot of people left. There were jobs in the cities.

"There were a lot of people (in the media) describing us. And there was the feeling of being under the microscope. Makes you want to squirm. We wanted to

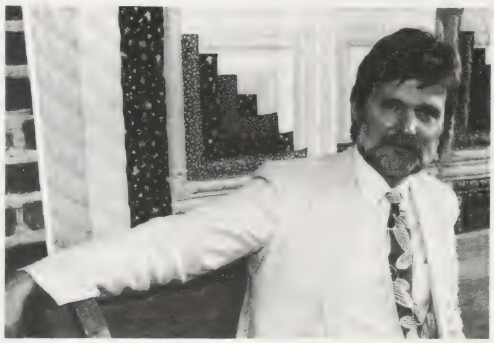
turn that around. Rather than there being a vision of this place that was described by people who didn't know it very well, that there would be something from inside Appalachia.

"This film workshop arriving was an unexpected twist in this whole very yeasty time. After putting these cameras on our shoulders and going out and talking to people in the community in a way that we hadn't previously growing up here, we just fell in love with the place that we were a part of.

"It isn't necessarily true that the people here would embrace *us*. The Vietnam War was going on, and there were these long-haired kids, and there was a lot of tension between the generations in this country. It wasn't necessarily true that the old folks would take us into their houses and feed us and sit down with us and tell us the truth, but it happened. I can't really understand it.

"I believe that they liked the idea of Appalshop. The idea that there would be these young mountain kids, and we would sit down and pay attention to them. I think it was a charge for them, and it was for us, too.

"There were a number of us who decided that we were going to stay in this place. At least in the region. It wasn't crystal clear there would be an Appalshop. This was a small organization. We were going to be here and try to not mine coal. There was an embracing of the place by those of us who worked here."



Let them eat film

Bill Richardson

When he graduated as an architect from Yale in the mid-1960s, Bill Richardson brought his new wife, Josephine, to Eastern Kentucky. Both were caught up in the social activism of the time. Richardson had videotaped his architecture thesis, and he wanted to do some community organizing, so when a grant for $50,000 became available from the Office of Economic Opportunity (a War on Poverty Program) and the American Film Institute, he started a film workshop.

Today Richardson is a full-time architect again. His office is all the way across town from Appalshop's headquarters—about four blocks, past the courthouse and modest stores. Richardson and

Continued on page 31

Appalshop's *Fat Monroe*

by **Laurene Scalf**

The film could have been called *My Drive with Monroe*. A boy on his way home from a Saturday matinee is picked up by a fat man who cruelly but hilariously challenges the boy's beliefs about his life and family. The film is actually titled *Fat Monroe*, as is the short story by Gurney Norman from which Appalshop director Andrew Garrison adapted the script.

William Johnson, a 10-year-old from Carbon Glow, vied with 79 other youngsters for the role of Wilgus Collier. When it came to the role of Fat Monroe, however, there was little competition. The beefy, enigmatic driver was played by actor Ned Beatty. A Kentucky native, Beatty began his film career in 1972's *Deliverance* and in the ensuing two decades has received acclaim for his film and television work.

William Johnston of Carbon Glow, Ky., in Appalshop's 15-minute dramatic film *Fat Monroe* starring Ned Beatty.

Beatty got to know about Appalshop from Jack Wright, a musician and June Appal record producer, whom he met on the set of *Coal Mining Women*, a TV movie starring former Charlie's Angel Cheryl Ladd as a miner.

Fat Monroe, produced in Appalachia, seems the antithesis of *Deliverance*, which was produced in Hollywood and depicts mountain people as murderous cretins. Garrison says he never discussed that disparity with Beatty. "I'm sure he's heard a lot about it over the years."

Fat Monroe, produced in 1990 and Appalshop's first dramatic film in 18 years, has won awards at several film festivals. "People like how the film works and unfolds," says Garrison. "I attribute that to the story I adapted it from. People relate to Wilgus because they've known someone like Monroe. People in New York say, 'My doorman is like that'; people from Ghana say, 'There's a man like that in my village.'"

Laurene Scalf is an actor and writer in Jonesborough, Tenn.

Tap Roots

Hazel.
"I can't recall the date, but the weather
was Presbyterian winter at its worst.
That's what mama called those damp gray days
at the dead end of spring. Lois called up
one morning, said she could maybe sneak us
on to the set of this Hollywood movie
being shot near town. I said, 'Little sister,
I ain't been in a theater since the War
and don't care if I never go again.
Call Molly.'"

Lois.
"It was 1947 —
around Flag Day, I think: it had been wet
for a week or so, and then one Monday
flags started blooming everywhere downtown,
at city hall, at the old post office
where your daddy was working the graveyard
every night, at the Federal Building
(the one across the street, with stone lions)
where I worked for the weather service.
We'd been married a little over a year.
Anyway, a wild girlfriend of mine,
Joyce Bryson, had somehow got us passes
to this movie they were shooting on location
out in the mountains, though the cast and crew
were staying in the Battery Park Hotel
just around the corner: we'd see their limousines
and buses pull out early every morning.
(We heard they got back hours after dark.)
So I called my sisters to see if they could go."

Molly.
"You must understand: I lived for the movies.
One of the first things I can remember
is sneaking under a trellis of pink roses
at the Round House on Lake Junaluska
for an open-air showing of *The Prince
and the Pauper*. (The Methodist ushers
just looked the other way and let us in:
everybody was poor, it was the Depression.)
I decided that I had been exchanged
for some little girl who was living the good life
intended for *me!* For a while I thought
it might be Shirley Temple, who was just my age.
I saw all of her movies. Saturdays
I'd ride the train into Canton for a dime
and catch the morning movie at the Strand,
then run uptown to see the matinee
at the Colonial—or the other way around.
I even had an autograph collection,
stars and starlets with their studio pictures
inscribed to *me*, hundreds and hundreds of them!
I gave most of them away, but I still have
the best one: 'To Molly, with fond regards,
Lauren Bacall.' Look at that hair, those eyes,
that perfect arch of eyebrow, lip, and nail!
She really *was* an idol. —So when Lois called
and said we could get on the set of *Tap Roots*,
right there with Susan Hayward and Van Heflin,
I was in heaven."

Hazel
"What I didn't say
to Lois was that it seemed right silly
to act like some B-movie shot in Swannanoa
could make a lick of difference in our lives,
might bring some immortality our way
or at least a little business, a picture
of Susan Hayward eating the house special
or Ward Bond strumming your best guitar. Hell,
the mountains were just a studio to them,
a godforsaken set, that's all. —Besides,
I had to go to work."

Lois.
"I took my Kodak.
Here's a shot from the bluff above the river.
It took all day to drive that wagon train
across that clearing: the clouds kept spoiling
the sunlight, casting shadows. So mostly
everybody stood around. There's Susan Hayward
talking to Van Heflin: see the state police
keeping back those women and their kids?
There's Whitfield Connor kicking at the mud;
those little girls seem interested in that.
Oh, here's Boris Karloff, with Ward Bond.
Doesn't he make a good Indian, with that dark skin
and those long black pigtails? Behind them is a mike
and some lights and a Universal camera.
There's George Marshall in front of that fake column
and wrought-iron porch. Here's a good one
of Susan Hayward's face, and Whitfield Connor
riding that handsome horse. —These are my favorites.
There's Molly getting Susan Hayward's autograph
outside her trailer, and one from Whitfield Connor
sitting on that barrel, while Miss Hayward
kisses her new husband in the background—see?
And finally, there's Molly, all alone.
Isn't she beautiful? She fixed her hair
just like Lauren Bacall that day."

Molly.
"That day
was just about the longest of my life.
Because nothing happened. They had to wait
for the clouds to clear so they could shoot a scene
that might last ten seconds in the movie.
They waited. And waited. Susan Hayward

was a good six inches shorter than me
and her hair was *orange*. Van Heflin was bald
and surly. When Whitfield Connor rode up
I cried, 'Oh, look at that beautiful *horse*!'
You should have seen him look at *me*. Everybody
was bored, the plantation was a false front,
the trees were props. No *lights, camera, action*!
No beautiful illusion, just dull work.
Movies never seemed quite the same again
after that day."

Hazel.

"I read the book, you know,
Tap Roots, by some fellow in Chapel Hill.
It wasn't bad, a Civil War story,
though it was set in Mississippi, not up here.
I saved some clippings from the Asheville paper
to give to Molly, though I never did.
'Youthful Hollywood actor Richard Long
suffered a broken arm when his horse reared
and threw him on location near the river.'
That means he didn't really know how to ride.
Here's his picture, before the accident:
'FILM STAR VISITS V.A. HOSPITAL.
Richard Long is chatting at the bedside
of Miss Martha Cross, a former WAVE.'
She doesn't look too happy; I wouldn't either,
wearing that gown and eating that crummy lunch
in front of a handsome stranger in a suit.
'Luther Louis, of 9 Arlington Street,
suffered minor injuries in an explosion
on location during a battle sequence,
and Odell Wilson, of Route 2 Avery's Creek,
another "extra" in the battle scene
was treated at St. Joseph's hospital
for injuries to his eyes and ears and hands.'
Wonder if those boys thought the glory
was worth it when the movie folks left town?
I like this part: 'The Chamber of Commerce
sent out a representative every day
to apologize for the weather to George Marshall,
the veteran director of *Tap Roots*,
armed with charts to prove that the climate
was perfect for the shooting of a film.'
Wish I'd seen *that*. And look here, isn't this
the last word on the whole affair? 'And then
one morning Asheville awoke to find itself
a normal little city once again.'"

Lois.

"I didn't get a picture of myself
on the set; Molly was so wide-eyed
I didn't want to bother her. It's just as well:
I was five months pregnant with your sister
and looking pretty dowdy. I enjoyed
seeing the other side of the silver screen,
so to speak, all those workers whose names
roll by so fast at the end of the movie.
I saw the finished product, by the way,
premiere night at the Imperial,
with Molly. It wasn't bad; Susan Hayward
acted like Scarlett O'Hara. But I think
I prefer *Gone With the Wind*."

Molly.

We saw *Tap Roots*
July 25, 1948,
Southern premiere in downtown Asheville,
limousines, flashbulbs, local celebrities.
The theater was hot and the movie
was flat: the romance was lost on me now.
But I couldn't help looking for myself
just beyond the edge of every frame,
like a thumbprint on the border of a picture
that shows a human hand was holding it.
Speaking of pictures, later that same year
I got a glossy back from Boris Karloff:
'With warm memories of *Tap Roots*, B.K.'
He has that same calm, faraway expression
he did that day when all the other actors
looked so harried—quiet, but somehow tragic.
Lois said he lost his wife and children.
Hazel said he was a dope fiend and a drunk.
That's the last picture I remember collecting."

Courtesy of Michael McFee

Whitfield Connor riding that handsome horse.

Michael McFee

Michael McFee just completed a year as visiting poet at the University of North Carolina. He has two new books: ***Sad Girl Sitting on a Running Board*** *and* ***To See****, with photographer Elizabeth Matheson.*

The Making of Movies in Appalachia

Tap Roots

"Hell, the mountains were just a studio to them, a godforsaken set, that's all."

The making of a movie in 1948 in Asheville, N.C., inspired Michael McFee to write a poem based on memories of his mother and aunts (previous two pages). Here are some more snapshots from their day on the set:

Right: "Here's a shot from the bluff above the river. It took all day to drive that wagon train across that clearing."

Lower left: "Oh, here's Boris Karloff with Ward Bond. Doesn't he make a good Indian with that dark skin and those long black pigtails?"

Lower Middle: "There's Susan Hayward talking to Van Heflin: see the state police keeping back those women and their kids?"

Though filmed in Asheville, the setting of *Tap Roots* was supposed to be Civil War Mississippi. Critic Leonard Maltin calls it an "Oddball venture into *Gone With the Wind* territory."

The Winter People

Far right (upper): Actress Kelly McGillis on-location in Avery County, N.C., in 1988 for the making of *The Winter People*. During the filming residents of Avery County found their electricity and phones cut off because their power and telephone lines had been taken down so that the scene would look old timey.

Goodbye Miss Fourth of July

Far right (lower): Dirt was trucked in to cover the paved streets in Jonesborough, Tenn., for the filming of *Goodbye Miss Fourth of July,* a television movie made by Disney in 1988. The story was set in turn-of-the-century West Virginia.

Courtesy of Michael McFee

NOW AN

Out There

Courtesy of Michael McFee

Courtesy of Michael McFee

Courtesy of Johnson City Press. Photo by Alan Broyles

Courtesy of Johnson City Press. Photo by Ron Campbell

Relatively Strange

On the Set of *Next of Kin*

by Anndrena Belcher

A beautiful, dark-skinned Jimmy Smits in the movie ***Old Gringo*** *plays one of Pancho Villa's top men. The revolutionary army storms the villa of his own youth and overtakes the aristocrats. After the peasants sing and dance and tell stories around the village fires, their leader beckons them all to enter the palatial hacienda. The poor ones walk quietly into the mansion which has been built on their own toil and suffering. They do not know how to act. Even though the tyrant is dead, the remembrance is strong. They have been taught their places. A little at a time, they explore the room. The ballroom is walled with gigantic mirrors. These little people are humble and self conscious. The tall, black-eyed warrior stands straight and understanding before his people. He waves his hand, arm outstretched from the throng of workers to the images in the glass. He smiles, "here," he offers, "look at yourselves. You are beautiful."*

The movie industry has had more than one field day making fun of us hillbillies. So I keep my ears perked as to what's coming next in the way of films that deal with us as subject or setting.

I liked *Old Gringo* so much because the Mexican hillbillies—or campesinos—got to tell their side of the story. It was refreshing. All my life I have been looking for images in stories, movies and on television that reflected my own life and experience as an Appalachian hillbilly. My family was one of the millions who left Eastern Kentucky coalfields and migrated north to the industrial centers for work. We moved to inner-city Chicago, a community called Uptown.

We watched *The Beverly Hillbillies, The Waltons, Daniel Boone, Thunder Road, Home from the Hill, Spencer's Mountain* and *Where the Lilies Bloom.* These movies and television shows didn't exactly reflect my own experience, but all did hold some images of home.

I remember as a child going to the Uptown Theater in Chicago, a beautiful old movie house left over from the days of vaudeville, to watch the movie *Li'l Abner.* I thought I would see something that would transport me back home to the mountains for an hour or two. But I came out of the movie house feeling confused and sick inside. I wondered why they didn't do it right. Everybody looked so stupid. The real hurt, though, came when I heard people saying things that showed they *did* believe those images. I wanted to explain. I wanted to tell everybody how it really was back home.

I figured I'd never be able to make a movie. I wasn't rich enough or powerful enough or beautiful enough (according to Hollywood standards), but I could make pictures with words. I became a storyteller. Public television via the Kentucky Network, KET, has allowed me to design my work and speak my piece. I have told my family migration story in a documentary called *Long Journey Home*, a film produced by Appalshop.

In September of 1987 I was performing in Chicago and visiting with my family who still lives in Uptown. My little sister, Belinda Faye, works as a paralegal in the neighborhood. I came home one evening, and Belinda told me that a movie director named John Irvin (who had made *Hamburger Hill, Raw Deal* and *Turtle Diary*) had come to the law center where she worked and asked if anyone there knew mountain people who would talk to him about leaving the hills and coming to live in Uptown. Of course, Belinda brought him to Mommy and Daddy.

They liked the man. He was Scottish and knew the kinship ties with mountain people in the Southern Appalachians. My family told me about the story the director was going to film: A young man played by Patrick Swayze leaves the mountains of Eastern Kentucky and comes to Chicago. He gets a job as a cop. The young man's little brother comes north and finds work, wants to stay just long enough to save money to buy a coal truck, but winds up getting knocked off by the Mafia. When Swayze's character, Truman Gates, takes his brother's body back home for the burial, the men in the family sit in a circle around the table and swear "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" on the Bible and give older brother Briar the job of finding the murderer and evening the score.

I listened to the story for *Next of Kin* and figured, "another good old stereotypical movie." I finished my work in Chicago and drove back home to Virginia. How could my work as a storyteller ever combat the images presented to so many in such a powerful way?

I have had several opportunities to work with commercial media, and believe me, I felt like I was making a deal with the devil each and every time. I've done commercials for the Bristol, Va.-Tenn., station WCYB, where I pitched a few fits about the stereotypes in the scripts of Ma and Pa Kettle-type commercials. I refused to be filmed driving a convertible with Red Maples and his donkey sitting in the back seat. I worked three days on the set of *The River* as Sissy Spacek's stand in. I quit, telling them they ought to practice what the film was preaching and give everybody union wages.

After that experience, I didn't think much more about the commercial film business until one night in April 1988. My old friend Tommy Bledsoe called and told me that a film company was holding auditions for a movie to be made over in

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Jean Ritchie on *Next of Kin*

Interviewed by J.W. Williamson

Patrick Swayze plays Chicago police officer Truman Gates visiting his Kentucky home with singer Jean Ritchie playing his aunt in a scene from *Next of Kin*.

I became involved with *Next of Kin* in 1988, at the end of June. I was just finishing up a week at Hindman Settlement School, and Tom Bledsoe, who is a storyteller and musician with Appalshop, came to me at Hindman and said, "Do you know what's happening over in Hazard." I said, no, I didn't. He said, "They're going to make a movie over there, and they're calling for local people to come try out." I didn't hope for a part, but I did want to see what they were doing, how they made a movie.

So we went down to the Holiday Inn in Hazard. In a little old back room there, you'd go in and they'd take your picture. And one by one we went in and talked to a roomful of people: John Irvin the director was there, the cinematographer, the head of makeup—all the heads of the various departments. Well, I fell in love with the director John Irvin. He's Scots, though he was educated in England. He and I were just like home folks. And I talked about connections between Appalachia and the Scots. He said, "We'll find a place for you in the cast." I laughed. But in the hallway outside, as I was leaving, I met this very energetic young man who yelled "Jean Ritchie!" like he knew me. This was the cameraman Stephen Poster. It turned out he had seen me in concerts in Chicago when he was a boy, and he remembered me. I was flabbergasted by that.

I went home and forgot all about it. About two weeks later the phone rang. They wanted me to take the part of Patrick Swayze's aunt—great-aunt, really—Charlene. They had us come back down to Hazard, and they started shooting after three or four days of rehearsal. Let me tell you what rehearsal was: we didn't go by the script. John Irvin told us what sort of character we were, and then he'd ask us to answer questions or respond to situations as that character. (I was supposed to be the widow of a coal miner, and I was supposed to be very bitter.) We were improvising according to who our character was. It was very sort of Elia Kazan. Irvin has us all tell stories as our characters about our past. I told one about what happened to one of my own ancestors: one day he told his wife and family he was going out for stove wood, but he really was leaving for Arkansas to find a better life, he thought. He came

back two years later and came into the house with an armload of firewood and dropped it behind the stove. And his wife said, "Supper's ready." I thought John Irvin would die laughing. "The same thing happened in my family," he said.

The dialect director was there—heavy-set, sandy-haired man, very top of his field, Robert Somebody. You could see him just soaking it all up, the way we talked. Then he began to talk to us in our own dialect, just like he was from down the holler. A sweet-natured person. (The whole crew was kind. They adopted every stray animal there was. The dialect coach took two or three abandoned cats with him—just couldn't stand to see them left.)

Though my character Charlene was supposed to be bitter, they didn't make me play it that way. Oh I *tried*, but when I did, Irvin said, "Don't do it that way. It doesn't sound right. Be yourself. Forget the script."

Which was a good thing, because some of us felt at the beginning that we shouldn't be associated with this movie because of the stereotypes of mountain people. Anndrena Belcher had a lot of doubts about it. She had the part of Patsy Ruth. Originally, she was to be a blind, almost middle-aged woman, but she had such good eyes that they told her to forget about playing it blind. In the finished movie, she had one line on the porch. She asked Patrick Swayze's wife, "Where'd you and Truman meet?" Anyway she called me in New York very upset. She said, "I go around talking about mountain stereotypes and how awful they are, and here I'm going to be in a Hollywood movie that stereotypes mountain people." I said, "Well, I'd like to do it because I've never been in a Hollywood movie, and maybe we can help." And I do think we influenced John Irvin to change many things, especially the ending. In the script, it was horrible how they were going to kill everyone off, all the mountain men fighting the Mafia in the Chicago cemetery, and I told Irvin that I thought it was awful, *all* the family men dying. Well, as time went by they toned it way down and made it much milder. Of course, mountain people are still stereotyped in the film, but it's not as bad as it might have been.

We all liked Liam Neeson. He was very Irish in his ordinary speech, but he handled the mountain dialect very well. As we were filming, I thought Swayze was very wooden, and I thought, "This is going to be awful." I was suprised when I saw the finished film that he was much more believable than I thought he'd be. Swayze wore that hat all the time [a broad-brimmed black felt number], and we were wondering, "What's that hat all about?"

The parallel between the hillbilly family and the Mafia family was much stronger in the script, and I had thought that was a good point, because the Italians came over to Chicago, or wherever, before Kentuckians moved up there, and the Italians had to establish themselves against prejudice and fight bigotry and all that, just like mountain people. The Italians' answer was to band together as a Mafia—I don't mean all of them, of course—to fight back. Hillbillies have done it in a similar way, fought the battles, but less criminally. But that parallel between hillbillies and the Mafia is much weaker in the finished movie: you have the ending scene where the surviving Mafia Godfather speaks as an equal to Truman Gates, who is kind of the leader of the hillbilly clan, and there's one earlier reference to a sense of shared identity, but they cut out so much, including my big scene. They filmed about 200 extras in a cemetery, the big funeral for Gerald, who has been killed in Chicago and brought back home for burial. It was quite a long scene, too. They rented a little church and used the graveyard, and I led in the singing of "Sweet Rivers of Redeeming Love," an Old Regular Baptist hymn. They cut it all, and the members of that little church were very disappointed when they didn't see their churchhouse in the film.

For Patrick Swayze's home in Perry County they rented a house from some people and evicted them for the duration of the filming. Wouldn't let them back in until they were through, and I remember the people were sort of desperate to get back into their house. The movie-people only took the exteriors there, though, the porch scenes. The interiors of that house were really an indoor set they built in the high school gymnasium in Hazard. They made two huge 30-by-30 blowups of the scenery that could by seen from the real house's windows, and rigged those blowups up very elaborately with lots of guy-wires and lights and everything outside the windows of the constructed set, so that if the camera happened to show a window, there would be the proper background out there. But in the finished film, you never even see a window on the inside of the house, so they wasted a lot of money on that.

All the local governments were very eager to help—after all, the movie spent over a million dollars around Hazard during the filming—and local officials were being very careful. But their eagerness to help caused a ruckus one time. The little house the movie people rented for Patrick Swayze's homeplace was on an unpaved road, and the morning of the shooting there, the movie company arrived to find the road had been freshly paved with asphalt [done by order of Perry County Judge Executive Sherman Nease, who has since become something of a film critic: he recently accused Appalshop of making a joke of Eastern Kentucky in *Fat Monroe*]. You've never heard such screaming. So they had to bring coal trucks in and cover the asphalt with dirt.

All of my scenes, except for one, were done in Hazard and Hardburly. They took one in Chicago, the scene of the mountain boys leaving Perry County to go fight the Mafia. They hadn't known for sure that they would want that scene at all, but they decided they really needed it, so they flew as many of the mountain people as could come up to Chicago for a week. They were also shooting the cemetery showdown scene at the same time. On rainy days, when they couldn't shoot the outdoor cemetery, they intended to shoot our scene, which was constructed indoors. But it didn't rain all week. So we stayed at the Holiday Inn in the Chicago Loop and partied it up at their expense. At the very end of the week, after they'd finished the cemetery shoot-out, they did our scene.

I had no idea John Irvin was going to give me a feature credit on the film. I would have done it without that. I'm glad I had that movie-making experience at least once, even if I didn't wholly approve of the content. Patrick Swayze and the songwriter did a song for the film called "Brothers," and when he did the video of it, he picked a shot of himself standing behind me in the porch swing to

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Hazard, Ky. He told me what he knew of the script: "This guy leaves the mountains and goes to Chicago and gets a job as a cop. His brother gets killed . . . " It sounded too familiar—and it was happening right in my own backyard. "They're looking for people to play the mountain characters," Tommy told me.

I had to check it out. I called the casting director and made an appointment. She took my picture with a Polaroid camera. She reassured me that the director was sensitive about this stereotyping stuff and did not want to make a movie that we mountain people would be ashamed of. They were doing their research. They rented Appalshop films about the culture and history of our area. The scriptwriter had worked around Uptown and in Eastern Kentucky as a volunteer of some sort. I figured they were doing something positive by even talking this way.

Still, when I got offered a small speaking part as Truman's cousin Patsy Ruth, I agonized over the decision. Should I take the part knowing what the movie industry had done in the past to portray mountaineers as violent savages, or should I stay away from it altogether as some of my performer friends had decided to do? After a fortune spent in long distance phone calls to my friends to learn their points of view, and after much debate with myself, I decided to take the part. I figured I couldn't do a thing about influencing the script if I were not in the thick of it, and a speaking part meant I would get to talk to the director.

Talk I did. I talked with John Irvin. I talked with Patrick Swayze. I talked with anybody who would listen. The crew seemed genuinely open to learning about this exotic mountain place and its people. Discussion topic at the dinner table: Does an artist have a social responsibility to portray a people as those people see themselves? Patrick Swayze agreed that this was a good idea.

The director told us that he wanted to hear what we had to say about the script and the set. I immediately made my list of concerns: snaggle-tooth Grandfather, tombstones that recorded deaths avenged in family feuds, fight scene where a mountain man kills one of the Mafia and disembowels him like a hog. He answered in checklist fashion: "No, you won't see that writing on the tombstones. We've changed the part where the mountaineer disembowels the Mafia man." I figured some progress had been made.

I could tell that even some of the "local hires" got tired of listening to me. When the cast of the Gates' family went to look at the trailer designed for brother Briar, I thought it was a joke. The trailer looked like a replica of a hillbilly tourist stand that would be found right next to the rattlesnake pit. When I said it was very exaggerated, one of the young Kentucky women who had been hired to play a family member spoke back at me defiantly, "Well, if you don't believe this is realistic, I can take you right up the road and show you something very much like it." We talked some about how, yes, there are places similar to this one, but what about exposing the viewing public to some of the other images that we haven't witnessed in films being produced about the mountains?

The man from Chicago who played the mountain grandfather, Joe Ryan, gave me some credit, though, for after waiting two weeks for the set of false teeth that would provide him with the snaggle-tooth look, the director decided against using them. Joe Ryan said to me, "It was you who convinced them that a man with this kind of family around him would surely have been taken to the dentist for a good pair of false teeth."

I wasn't the first to ask questions, but every little change that came as a result of someone challenging the images served to reinforce my feeling that you have to speak up. The director could make powerful changes, but his field of magic covered only so much territory. He felt that Hollywood had a hard time believing that the public could handle the departure from certain of the stereotypes common to the mountaineer. That's one reason we were all costumed in clothes from the late 1940s or 50s. Since this particular story took place in the late 1980s, more than one person asked, "Why are we all dressed like this?"

I like old-timey clothes. I wear them a lot in my performances and in everyday life. But even if families wear hand-me-downs, not everybody in the region dresses behind the times. Rodney Hatfield, known for his work as harmonica player and singer for the Metro-

"I figured I couldn't do a thing about influencing the script if I were not in the thick of it, and a speaking part meant I would get to talk to the director. Talk I did."

Storyteller Anndrena Belcher

Belcher

politan Blues All Stars band, is from Pike County, Ky., and had a part in *Next of Kin*. He figured the director was listening. But he went to his wardrobe fitting and came back out to the swimming pool saying, "Man, they put me in a suit that's way too big for me. I look like Jed Clampett or something."

I myself had been scolded by the wardrobe mister. This man was not at all keen on my picking out my own costume and stood agape when I came to him wearing my favorite beaded earrings. He always wore black and white. He had white hair which he pulled back and coiled into a small knibby-knobby of a bun at the nape of his neck. He was rather large and pear shaped, had large, shining white front teeth and rendered an overall resemblance to my own images of Mother Goose. I am not making fun here. I like Mother Goose, and I was looking forward to playing in his roomful of clothes. But he dropped his jaw in disapproval and shook his head in horror, "Didn't they tell you not to come in here wearing all that jewelry? Take it off, take it off."

I took off my jewelry, and we managed to find three different outfits for my three scenes. I reported to wardrobe at 6:00 a.m. on the day we were scheduled to shoot my little speaking scene on the Gates' family porch. I was handed a pair of pink and white striped flannel pajamas with the buttons stained to look old. The pajamas were covered with an old terry robe from the 1930s. When I noted that there had been a change in costume from that which we had decided upon that day in wardrobe fitting, the wardrobe mister gently touched the robe and told me that I should feel honored to wear this garment because it had come from years of duty on the set of *The Waltons*.

I just shook my head and donned the cuddly, warm clothes. I saw an advantage to this costume on this chilly mountain morning, but as the day blazed into a hot autumn heat, I wondered if "The Mister" hadn't planned the whole thing as a way of having me serve penance for my upstart and outspoken ways.

My stomach tightened as I watched *Next of Kin* for the first time. I sat alone in the black room at the 5 o'clock showing in Kingsport, Tenn. I could not look at the first murder scene, but I watched as we mountaineers were served up stereotypically alongside of blacks and Italians who received the same treatment.

I could count the spots where I had been involved in some sort of change, and I felt good about that. The front porch scene had been noted in reviews as one of the more authentic. But there were many more scenes that needed change. As I watched, I thought, "Boy, I would have raised Cain about that if I'd been there."

I realized that my questioning had little real effect. I could see that the people who have the money to make a commercial film with a handsome, hip-slinging stud of a star like Patrick Swayze are really not committed to telling the truth. They are interested in selling tickets, and most believe that the average moviegoer is not interested in the truth, no matter how exciting it is.

I have heard people say, "The winner of the war gets to write the history." I would agree that things have been working that way, much to the detriment of the poor, the powerless, the regular, everyday working person in this country and in countries around the world.

That may be true, but once a person knows that he or she is worth something, it's hard to shut that person up. I think about the reaction I got when I quit working as a stand-in on *The River*. Most of my friends understood why I quit, but some people thought I was crazy. "Why, I'd work for nothing just to get to look at Mel Gibson," somebody said. Mel was handsome, but he didn't appear any more God-like than any other man or woman I've seen in Scott County, Va., where I live, or anywhere else, for that matter.

"Mountaineers, look at yourselves. You are beautiful."

Storyteller, dancer and dress-up artist Anndrena Belcher lives in Scott County, Va., and takes her work to communities and schools.

Ritchie

go into it. Someone told me they'd seen me in music video, and I didn't even know it.

I thought all the bows and arrows and axes and snakes that they gave the mountain men were kind of, well, humorous. Anndrena Belcher was complaining about that, and I said, "Well, don't you *know* people like that?" Anndrena said, "Well, yes, but they shouldn't be depicting us all that way." I said I thought they were just saying some were that way. The "snake man" was fun. He was a nice guy, too. I *do* know people like that, *shucks*. It's not *quite* Li'l Abner and Daisy Mae; it's along those lines, but it could have been a whole lot worse. They had long talks with Anndrena because they sensed she was unhappy about the stereotypes, and they wanted her in the movie, and they wanted her to feel all right about it.

What do the movies find in these mountains? As I look out from my porch at the scene I can see, I think I see my whole past, our whole history before me. The earth seems so strong and everlasting. These mountains, our land, is still a little wild, catch-as-catch-can. You can hike and hunt on much of it, because nobody seems to own it, nobody has it fenced in and locked up. It's not like everywhere else in this country. Most everywhere else has safeguards on the land against trespassers, but not here. There's a kind of magic in that, and for a Scotsman—I think Irvin was already inclined to go along with the old idea of the romance of mountains and mountaineers. We mountain people tend not to like the romantic approach; we want it told like it is. But the movies want the magic.

Jerry Williamson edits ***Appalachian Journal*** *at Appalachian State University and is writing a book on film and Appalachia.*

Listen to the Music in the Air:
Early Radio Days in East Tennessee

Archives of Appalachia, ETSU

Tennessee Ernie Ford worked for WOPI in the 1930s.

by Richard Blaustein

Broadcasting is such a pervasive part of everyday life in modern America it is hard to realize that there are many people alive today who can remember when radio was still an exciting novelty. Though we tend to think of the Southern Appalachians as old-fashioned and isolated, it was not very long after KDKA in Pittsburgh, the first commercial radio station in the United States, went on the air in 1919 that pioneering broadcasters in Appalachia began experimenting with the new medium.

Straddling the Tennessee-Virginia line, the city of Bristol has played a prominent role in the recording *and* broadcasting of Appalachian music. Several years before Victor Records talent scout Ralph Peer recorded Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family and other notable regional musicians in a makeshift studio on the Tennessee side of State Street, Bristol was already the site of experimental country music broadcasts.

Bristol's first commercial broadcaster was a native of Greene County, Tenn., W.A. Wilson, Sr. Born in the remote Caney Branch community in 1892 not far from the rugged Shelton Laurel section of neighboring Madison County, N. C., Wilson became interested in telegraphy at a very early age. In 1907 Wilson was hired by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad as an assistant telegrapher. By 1920, he had become chief operator and head of the engineering department of the Western Union office in Bristol, Tenn. Wilson became interested in the commercial possibilities of radio and opened the area's first retail radio shop in 1923. As Wilson recollected in his unpublished memoirs:

> I have the honor of selling the first domestic radio set in Bristol as far as anybody knows. This set was sold to a Mrs. Burke, the mother of Dent King Burke, a three tube Westinghouse set with batteries for the sum of $165.

Radio broadcasting was still sporadic and unreliable during the early 1920s, which led Wilson to invent what seems to have been an early precursor of Muzak and cable broadcasting:

> I thought it might be a good idea to arrange to furnish music by wire to hotels, business houses and restaurants, so a line was installed at the rear of buildings on the Virginia side [of State Street] from Front Street to Piedmont Street. An amplifier was installed at the Piedmont location . . . a spring turntable was installed at the residence (there were no electric turntables then), we played recordings but had to keep the turntable wound up. We also had a piano player, a Miss Edith McMillan.

During these early years, Wilson continued to experiment

Archives of Appalachia, ETSU

"And so we had plenty of good fiddling and plenty of good entertainment — that's the type of music my dad said would put fire in your heels."

W. A. Wilson at radio station WOPI - FM ca. 1948.

with radio broadcasting. By 1925 country music lovers in the area were able to enjoy occasional programs of old-time string band music. Claude Grant (1902-1975), a Bristol native who toured briefly with Jimmie Rodgers before the Singing Brakeman made his recording debut in Bristol in 1927, took part in Wilson's pioneering broadcasts. Shortly before he died Grant told me:

> I remember when Mr. Wilson was sorta experimenting with little crystal sets, radio. He was doing this at home. We used to go out to his home and fool around out there with him. And he finally got to where he could transmit, you know; send it out.

In 1925, Wilson convinced the Sterchi Brothers furniture store in Bristol to sponsor a broadcast of an old-time string band contest including Claude Grant's band, the Tenneva Ramblers, Fiddling Dudley Vance and his family band from nearby Bluff City and several other local musicians. Listeners sending in postcards from the greatest distance won prizes from Sterchi's, which incidentally enabled Wilson to test the range of his signal.

These experimental broadcasts continued for several years. Wilson assembled and tested professional quality equipment, received a license from what was then called the Federal Radio Commission, and officially launched WOPI, the oldest continuously operated commercial radio station in Northeast Tennessee, in 1929:

> The studio and the transmitter were located at State and 22nd Streets in Bristol, Tennessee. We went on the air June 15, 1929, at 6 PM with 100 watts on 1500 kc but later had to move to 1490. Hours: 7:00 AM to 9 AM; 10 AM to 12 PM; 4 PM to 6:00 PM, and 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM. Why these hours? We had to let the motor-generators cool off every two hours.

A strong civic booster in Bristol throughout his long business career, Wilson's call letters stood for ***Watch Our Population Increase***. The lunch counter cynics along State Street preferred, however, to call the station ***Wilson's Old Phonograph Institute***.

The year 1929 was not a good time for establishing any sort of new business, but somehow W.A. Wilson managed to survive the worst of the Great Depression, and by 1935, he had established the first radio barn dance program in the area, which he called the Saturday Night Jamboree. A number of well-known country performers from East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia appeared on the show, including the Carter Family, the Tenneva Ramblers, Archie Campbell, Charlie Bowman, Chet Atkins, Homer and Jethro, and Tennessee Ernie Ford, who worked as a part-time announcer on WOPI while still a high school student in Bristol. A matinee show for amateurs on Saturday afternoons gave many local performers their first radio broadcasting experience. As W.A. Wilson's son James C. Wilson recalled:

> Saturday afternoon was country and hillbilly time at WOPI in Bristol. And they'd come there by truckloads from all over this area to play. And so Dad would put 'em on as soon as they could get 'em into the studio.
>
> They only allowed fifty people at a time, so the other fifty people had to stay outside, 'cause the fire marshall wouldn't let but so many into the building. And also, outside they had some church organization that sold ice cream and watermelon. And so that went on all day.
>
> And so we had plenty of good fiddling and plenty of good entertainment — that's the type of music my dad said would put fire in your heels. And that's exactly what he used to promote all the time — good country music.

By the late 1930s, though, WOPI was no longer the only commercial broadcaster in Northeast Tennessee. WJHL-AM was initiated in 1938 by a Johnson City businessman, Hanes Lancaster. (The station was purchased by James C. Wilson in 1960 and renamed WJCW). The following year, Lancaster

launched his own Saturday afternoon amateur show live from the stage of the Bonnie Kate Theatre in Elizabethton, Tenn. During the early 1940s, the Barrel of Fun entertained an estimated audience of 3.5 million in the heartland of the Southern Appalachians. Some of the performers included Jim and Jesse McReynolds, Speedy Clark and the Lonesome Pine Boys, and local favorites such as Pappy Tom Slagle, George Simerly, Jack Lane, and Shorty Shehan.

So many of its performers were called up in the draft that the Barrel of Fun was discontinued in 1944. By the time it returned to the air in 1947, the Barrel of Fun was being overshadowed by WCYB (now WZAP) in Bristol, Va., which featured a wealth of exciting new bluegrass talent. Nearly all of the first generation bluegrass acts played on WCYB in the late 1940s and early 1950s, including such luminaries as Flatt and Scruggs, the Stanley Brothers, Mac Wiseman, Leslie Keith, Ralph Mayo and Carl Story, just to name a few.

By the mid-1950s, however, the rise of television, rock music and the centralization of the country music business in Nashville were bringing about the demise of live local country music broadcasting in Northeast Tennessee and elsewhere. But the tradition of music-making itself never died out entirely. It took new forms, such as the family country dance barn, or it simply returned to what it had been before the advent of radio: a favorite form of home entertainment.

It is curious to note that the only station still broadcasting live local country music in Northeast Tennessee today is W.A. Wilson's brainchild, WOPI, which recently celebrated its 62nd birthday. Still transmitting at a hundred watts, just as it did in 1929, WOPI offers a weekly live program featuring talent from Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee.

They say that radio signals radiate infinitely through space. It's just possible that W.A. Wilson, wherever he might be, is tapping his toes to the old-time mountain music he put on the airwaves back in those early days when WOPI was truly "the Pioneer Voice of The Appalachians."

Richard Blaustein plays fiddle for the Dixie Dewdrops and the East Tennessee State University Bluegrass Band.

Television Comes to Johnson City

In the early 1950s preachers raged against it. A lot of folks thought there was really a live person in the box. And kids gawked for hours through store windows at its fuzzy image.

"We were mesmerized," said Wayne Laws, who was 10 in 1953. "My friends and I used to walk through downtown Johnson City on our way to the Majestic Theater. The TV sets would be on in the Sears window. You couldn't hear the sound, but we'd watch the picture for hours."

"A lot of people used to come into the store just to look and marvel," said Ray McCrary owner of Johnson City Radio and TV Service.

Television had come to Johnson City, and with its appearance came far-reaching changes in community and family life. At first the new medium was regarded as an expensive curiosity. Few people bought sets since a decent signal was hard to capture. "You needed a tall antenna to get a picture and there was a lot of snow," McCrary said. "In some places you couldn't get anything at all."

Then WJHL went on the air on September 1, 1953, and Johnson City received its first clear television signal. McCrary sold his first set, a 17-inch Admiral, for $450. The buying rush was on.

Earliest to buy sets were farm families, not well-paid professionals. Many bought sets after yearly tobacco sales. "One family would buy a TV and would invite all their neighbors to come see it," McCrary said.

As the number of sets grew, so did the ire of some clergy. "A lot of older people thought television was the root of all evil," McCrary said, "but preachers were the worst. One day I sold a TV to a church deacon. His preacher found out about it and made him take it back."

What was the bill of fare in those early days? McCrary said his personal favorites were *I Love Lucy*, followed closely by the locally-produced *Bonnie Lou and Buster*.

CBS provided the bulk of the programming, with NBC, ABC and DuMont supplying the rest. Most network programs were shipped to the station via film and then were broadcast locally. But the lion's share of the programming was local and live.

Dick Ellis read the news every night. Nick Carter, who owned a furniture store, sponsored a country music show with pickin' and grinnin'. The most popular local show, by far, was hosted by the singing duo of Bonnie Lou and Buster.

And there were the cooking shows—lots of cooking shows.

Since shows were live, viewers were often treated to moments of unexpected humor. "The incidents I remember most are the ones you couldn't print," said retired general manager Hanes Lancaster, Jr. Al Gregory, present program director, remembered the dog who suddenly became amorous over a goat in plain view of the cameras. Another time someone stapled Dick Ellis' news copy together so he couldn't separate the papers as he finished one story and began another. Then there were the snowball fights in the middle of the weather report.

In the first year or two after WJHL went on the air, the availability of a clear picture in Johnson City suddenly and dramatically changed the way its citizens lived and thought. Whole new worlds opened up for them in their living rooms.

TV, like rock 'n' roll, was inevitable. Modern technology had come to Johnson City and, for better or worse, was destined to remain.

Live television at WJHL is no longer freewheeling. Television sets have become so inexpensive and so necessary that most families own at least two. The "person in the box" theory of TV transmission has long ago fallen into disfavor. And now church deacons can own television sets just like everyone else.

Ed Price's book on East Tennessee ghosts is forthcoming from John F. Blair.

by Charles Edwin Price

Mountain Eagle (continued from page 15)

Gish. Advertising revenues provide a living for the staff of five.

When the Gishes want to take a vacation, old friends who have worked with the *Eagle* in the past come down and take over for a few weeks. But the Gishes stay with it most of the time. Gish writes every editorial. "Pat wrote one once, I think," he says.

Tom Gish's editorials speak with the voice of an old-time liberal. On the 30th anniversary of food stamps, he writes about how important the program is. He writes about how the Supreme Court is doing damage to the Bill of Rights, how the Democratic party needs a leader. The tone is often sarcastic, annoyed.

He takes on local politicians with the most vigor: The mayor of Whitesburg has proposed trading the local industrial site for another and using the old site as a shopping center. The supposed justification is that the old site is on a 100-year flood plain. "We are not sure we understand the difference between manufacturing plants and shopping centers when it comes to damage from those 100-year floods, but presumably our city fathers do. . . Regardless of the presumed pluses or minuses of the present industrial site, (Mayor James B.) Asher's new site still strikes us as the biggest lemon that has come along."

The courage that it takes to keep an eye on the foxes guarding the hen houses has been applauded outside of Letcher County. Gish makes an effort to remember the various honors. He's most pleased about the Zenger prize because it was awarded by his peers, and "It's an honor just to be nominated." Pat mentions the Elijah Lovejoy Award from Southern Illinois University for courage in journalism. Tom mentions that he liked being named by *Newsweek* magazine as one of the 100 outstanding Americans in 1976. (This date is easy; it was a special bicentennial issue.) And NBC did a series of specials on "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness," hosted by David Brinkley, with one program focusing on the *Eagle*. Playboy Foundation gave the *Eagle* a "First Freedom Award" in 1983. "Heck, I don't know," says Gish, clearly less comfortable with this topic than with discussions of issues.

"Bobby Jean Collins said they had to admit her mother Bertie Maggard to Letcher Manor last week. Knowing Bobby, she will see her very often."
Hassie Breeding Helton Jeremiah

The issue that most involves the editor these days is education in Kentucky. This year the governor appointed a new state board of education to implement a new law that mandated sweeping reforms. Tom Gish was one of his appointments. "It's really very radical. It puts the responsibility of operating schools to school councils which are teacher dominated. A school that does what it is supposed to do will get bonuses. Schools that fail, funds will be withheld, and parents can transfer kids into any other school. They will send in a distinguished educator who can hire, fire, change the curriculum."

Not being an educator or a parent with school-age children, Gish says he can be objective. "I have no particular axes to grind." But he's committed and spends a good part of every day on it. "Education reform success is probably the most important thing facing Kentucky in 50 years," he says, all traces of irony gone for the time being.

For the most part, he has felt his own effectiveness rested in presenting issues in *The Mountain Eagle*. But this appointment gives him an irresistible chance to change Kentucky's educational system directly. Besides, the paper is in good shape. "We've been able to survive," says Gish, "I wouldn't say triumph, but the paper's doing well. That says as much about the community as it does about the paper."

The solid support in the community means that the *Eagle* has great freedom. "We don't let ourselves be manipulated." But Gish worries about the future for all the press in the United States. He bemoans ever-more-restrictive Supreme Court decisions. The wry sensibility is back. "I think it's ironic that as democracy blossoms in Russia, we become more restrictive every day. Democracy is in serious trouble here."

Not with the Gishes and *The Mountain Eagle* around.

repair

I finally broke down and got my TV fixed today.
I had its tubes tied.

— Bob Henry Baber

Yankee Be Damned

Flares are no longer meant for the trunk,
for roadside emergencies.
Flares are now stuck in "vaw-says,"
heaped on graves,
or given to wives in silent appeasement.

Ranches no longer hold roaming cattle, where
New Yawk & Chi-caw-go dudes bounce
"ow ow ow ow ow" on cantering ponies.
Ranches are now lifted out of "too" boxes,
are used to tighten nuts.

O's are no longer found in the alphabet.
O's are kin to Buicks, O's are what you drive to
Atlanna.

This slippery new language is now at home in my throat.
This Yankee's damned: he's stayin'.

—Michael Scott

Formerly from Chicago, Michael Scott teaches reading at Northeast State in Tennessee.

I step next door to the Courthouse Cafe, a pleasant restaurant owned by Josephine Richardson. As we discuss the origins of Appalshop over coffee, Josephine stops to chat, as does one of the Richardson children, a high-schooler on his way to football practice. It's a good-looking, personable family.

Richardson remained directly involved with Appalshop for eight years after he started it in 1969. He then designed the remodeling of the building that now houses Appalshop. He still helps with various projects (such as an effort to soundproof the theater).

"I was interested in artistic production, being a part of creating some really beautiful thing that had something to say strong and to the point. I'm a child of the social issues of the middle-60s. Many of the issues are still very much with us. It's a great experience, great fun, to invent a lifestyle to involve those sorts of values on an ongoing professional way. Try to go out here and find a job that's worth a shit. What profession do you want to practice that has the values that Herbie's got in his work?

"We set up in (what had been) a Main Street used tire shop, and they were going out of business. That's a fairly low ebb of economic activity. There was no industry (here) to speak of. Let them eat film. We tried everything else.

"Herbie, from day one, he and the others, just grabbed this thing and ran like crazy. They were extremely bright and creative. Everybody had a key, so it was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can imagine what that would be like like in a small Appalachian town in 1970. The American Legion was worried about this communist effort come to organize their youth. But since we were paying everybody, a lot of people forgave us for a lot of our sins. We hired 10 people that summer to make films about this area. That got parents off our backs. It was a job. It was serious. It must be all right. And they had jobs making movies.

"OEO wanted us to call it the Community Film Workshop of Appalachia, which was a hell of a bunch of bureaucratic gibberish. We just kept condensing it until we got down to Appalshop.

"We made a bunch of good films that first year, and we put out a little magazine. We had a full page on each of the films we did: Coal Miner Frank Jackson; Chester Cornett, Letcher County Butcher. We sent out this flyer, and more and more people started buying films. A couple of state universities bought whole sets, several thousand dollars of orders. That got our attention.

"From there, other people came and wanted to do other projects. Jack Wright started a record company doing mountain music (June Appal Records). Music quickly became the big thing. Then Don Baker came on with Roadside Theater.

"I knew how OEO was so flighty politically; there'd be a million reasons for them to cut off funding. It lasted about a year and a half before they got cold feet, but by then we had this little corporation set up. They sent a guy down here to try to close us, to try to get our original films, even padlock the door, fire me as director and hire one of my assistants. OEO hired some friggin' maniac. He brought a gun and emptied it, shot it into a hillside below my house he was so frustrated. It was pretty amazing. We didn't have anything to lose. We didn't owe anybody any money. We didn't even know what money was. Now we could never do that.

"There were eight workshops that started (through the country) and there's only one left, I think. OK, why did we succeed? It was the chemistry of about 50 ingredients mixed together: We had a bunch of really smart kids. They were fearless; they didn't have anything to lose. We formed this local non profit. Instead of giving salary so much we gave ownership and power over the organization straight out. If you are on the board, the commitment is a lot deeper than an employee. I think the idea of having multi media (is good), so if the radio station's really hot this year and it gets two or three grants, the organization still thrives even though something else like the magazine fails. It serves a lot of markets and a lot of audiences. There was a lot of artistic integrity and intensity to the work and always has been. If you get that kind of response to something you've made, then people become your allies. Also being from Appalachia is helpful when it comes to funding. You don't just have a hired fund raiser; everybody is a fund raiser. The other thing is earned income. It's been the basis of everything. And the broadness of the roots; you cut off one, and there are plenty of others."

Five years and 48 hours

Mimi Pickering and Anne Johnson

Headwaters *television producer Anne Johnson and film maker Mimi Pickering contrast the way they work with the way commercial TV operates. "Look at* ***48 Hours****," says Pickering. "They* ***brag*** *about the fact that they only stay in a place two days and do a story. Can you imagine that?"*

Johnson and Pickering's ***Chemical Valley*** *is another story entirely. The Kanawha Valley community of West Virginia lies in the shadow of the only factory in the U.S. that manufactures MIC, the deadly chemical that killed 3,500 in Bhopal, India. For five years Anne Johnson and Mimi Pickering documented the community's dialogue about safety, health and economic issues among residents and with outside officials.*

P.O.V. (Point of View), the Public Broadcasting System's nationally distributed show featuring independent documentaries, selected ***Chemical Valley*** *for showing this year.*

Mimi Pickering is from California and came to the region via Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, which sent students on internships in Appalachia. Pickering's assignment led her to Appalshop in 1971, and she has been making documentaries here ever since.

She made a film in 1975 about West Virginia's 1972 Buffalo Creek flood that killed 125 people and left 400 homeless, and she went back in 1984 to do a follow up. Her biography of a labor organizing songwriter, ***Dreadful Memories: The Life of Sarah Ogan Gunning****, made in 1988, won prizes at film festivals in Atlanta and Athens, Ohio.*

Anne Johnson came from the Washington, D.C., area as the associate director of the Academy Award-winning documentary, ***Harlan County, U.S.A.*** *She married a man who worked in the coalfields. That was 10 years ago. As director of the* ***Headwaters*** *television series, which comes out seven times a year, she explores the region, producing videos as diverse as* ***Minnie Black's Gourd Band*** *(1988), a portrait of the "first lady of gourd art," to* ***Frontier Nursing Service*** *(1984), a look at the pioneering rural nurse and midwifery service in Leslie County, Ky.*

We sit in the open reception area of Appalshop's offices. Why does this organization work so well when so many agencies that began in the War on Poverty years failed, I wonder. "There are other ones that have succeeded," says Johnson. "I'm not into War on Poverty bashing."

But they do try to explain how this thriving non-profit is remarkable. They emphasize the diversity, the many sources of funding. And they say that not having a strong leader is healthy. "We don't have one director that we live or die by," says Pickering. Johnson agrees,"There's no charismatic leader here. There's no guru." What they have instead is collective management. Unlike most non-profit boards, the 40 members of the board are, or have recently been, staff members. They all sit through the all-day board meetings five times a year and decide on all aspects of the operation. The result, somehow, is not confusion.

I wonder how the organization gets along with the community. There have been controversies over images presented in films, such as debate over ***Fat Monroe*** *when the little boy washes his hands in a puddle that's dirty with coal dust.*

Mimi Pickering: When the powers-that-be call things negative, it can be an attempt to whitewash. They don't want those (problems) addressed, because *they're* part of the problem. Some of our films show flat-out hard-ass poverty. We do present the people with dignity and their efforts to deal with the situation.

Anne Johnson: It depends on who you are talking about as your community. We represent common people, working people, people who usually don't have representation. I just finished up a piece on women that work in fast food restaurants. And I don't think that McDonald's is going to like it very much, but that's not so important to me. To me the community in that case were the women that were working in the restaurants.

MP: If everybody likes us, then we're not doing our job.

AJ: *Headwaters* has been very well received. Programmers have been pleased. There's very little that comes out of a specific region (the way *Headwaters* does). That's what public television should be doing.

MP: For years we were trying to get our work on national television. After awhile we said, this is ridiculous; our primary interest was reaching people in the region. We started a live weekly show in a studio, and it evolved (into Headwaters). TV is great for getting to an audience.

I really love working with what people have to say, working to tell their stories and working to tell a larger story through the stories of many people. It's a great medium to talk about the issues involved in this area, most of which I think are issues important to people all around the world.

Chemical Valley. **Paramedics transport residents of Institute, W. Va., to area hospitals after a chemical leak at the neighboring Union Carbide Plant.**

Television that rolls up its sleeves

Robert Gipe

After Rob Gipe finished his studies for a master's degree from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst in 1988, he visited his family in Kingsport, Tenn. He planned to return to U. Mass in the fall for his Ph.D. in American Studies. In the meantime he looked into his own region. He and Appalshop soon stumbled across each other. He turned down a fellowship at U. Mass. and said he would work at Appalshop for a year or two. It's been three years now, so far. Gipe works on marketing and distribution and has developed an educational program, the Appalshop School Initiative. It involves Foxfire-trained teachers and their students in 30 counties in Eastern Kentucky, who explore the use of Appalachian media and the place of regional culture in the school curriculum.

Gipe, a tall, skinny blond in his 20s, is one of the youngest members of the

staff. Sitting in his office after work, I asked him about his perspective. And whatever happened to his plans for graduate school?

"I don't know what I'd do that I'd learn more. It's very much applied learning, but it's always learning. It's always being surrounded by ideas.

"You come live here, and you realize it's different, and the more rugged the mountains get, the more there's a deeply ingrained sense of community, I think. I came from a different milieu. In Kingsport I saw people from all over the country all my life. Rochester, N.Y., was almost like Kingsport, because there's so many people from Eastman (the company that dominates both towns). What makes Whitesburg different as a community from, say, Kingsport is that everybody seems more tangled up with each other.

"As an organization we've learned a lesson in the community. That there's something to be gained by really caring about each other. There's a loss of privacy. It's a tradeoff, because it's more caring. You come work here, you eat with people you work with, you travel with people you work with, you see them at their best, you see them at their worst. It's just as bad as family and just as good as family. It shows in the work.

"All this evolved in a place that was geographically inaccessible. I find when we go to national meetings, we seem to know how to cooperate better, not just with each other, but with funders, audiences.

"I don't make stuff (films) as much as carry stuff to the world. I feel really invested in it. I've been here for a cycle now. I've seen a *Headwaters* series start and get put together and come out. I've been called up to watch things in process. If you're going to be here, you're going to be a part of what comes out of here.

"One of the great things about Appalshop, when you watch the old films, it says, 'directed by,' and there's 15 people. That's what I like. You survive as a group. If we get caught up in egos, we're not Appalshop any more.

"It affects my educational philosophy. Schools need to get away from helping kids rise to the top. Let's teach groups to advance together. Let's have kids doing stuff and not leaving people behind. A small community (like Whitesburg) gives a model to an arts organization, and it's so logical, but it's so rare.

"As far as being young, it's real interesting to be around 60s people. There's a residual idealism, the idea that things can happen, that you can just pick up and do. That attitude I never got from friends my age. In some ways these people (at Appalshop) are younger than my peers. There's just an attitude of, pick it up and do it naked. (But in my age group) it's like, we can't do these things. We don't have training. I think, what am I, Generation X? Twenty-something.

"Some of this is hillbilly, and some is the '60s. It's part of what made Appalshop so appropriate for its moment in the early '70s. As this work has evolved it's more concerned with how media can make life better. It's the maturity of the '60s idea. Just that things could be better. You know, the first year I was in college was the year Reagan got elected, and I knew that things were never going to be better in terms of social welfare in this country. It was going to be better if it was already good for you. That was Reagan's program. But it's just not like that here. It's television that rolls up its sleeves. It helps people deal with things."

Thanks to the many people from Appalshop who also provided information including Carolyn Sturgill, Maxine Kenny, Jim Webb, Rich Kirby, Scott Oliver, Elizabeth Barret and Ray Moore.

Video Game

I can't sleep any more
And it's just as well.

All the better to watch CNN

The war, live and in color,
Around the clock.

SCUDs, Tomahawks, Patriots,
Other volatile "assets"
Rain in both directions.

The sky is falling.

Laser-guided smart bombs,
Shells the size of cars.

It's hard to tell, on TV,
Just whose missiles and mortars

Are whose.

It's a scorecard war;
Get your program, popcorn
And cold beer.

It's a hell of a war.
And a good thing war is so awful

The famous general said,

Lest we should grow
Too fond of it.

And he didn't even have TV
Back then, on Virginia hillsides.

Just box seats and binoculars

At the home field,
With a picnic lunch.

Maybe baseball wasn't
the only entertainment

We invented

During the Civil War.

— Garry Barker

*Garry Barker, Berea College Crafts, has a new book, **The Handcraft Revival in Southern Appalachia, 1930-1990** (University of Tennesee).*

Reviews

The Appalachian Photographs of Earl Palmer

by

Jean Haskell Speer

The University Press
of Kentucky
Lexington
1990
$29.00 (hardcover)

Roberta Herrin

Courtesy of the Appalachian Collection, University Libraries, Virginia Tech.

Abandoned farmhouse in Monongahela National Forest, 1960. Photographer Earl Palmer added the fence by darkroom manipulation.

If you pick up a copy of *The Appalachian Photographs of Earl Palmer*, you will probably browse through the pictures first, not the introduction—and rightly so. This is after all a showcase of powerful photographs—many of which are now famous. You will be drawn into them, momentarily seduced, and pulled backward into a mythical time and place.

Viewing these photographs, I willingly suspend disbelief and am absorbed by the "fiction" before my eyes: Lula Conrad making grit bread; Buren Cockram sitting beside his spring house; children in "gleeful play" on a "back country lane"; split rail fences zigzagging across rural landscapes, complemented by oak baskets, quilts, bee trees, apple butter and moonshine stills. "Reading" the photographs makes me feel secure, comfortable, unabashedly sentimental and nostalgic.

But reading Jean Speer's excellent introduction disturbs that nostalgia and makes me suspicious of these visual images. And therein lies the value of this book. Speer has exposed Palmer's mythical Appalachia for what it is, but she has done so with sensitivity. Her appreciation for the historical tradition out of which Palmer's art evolved makes this book an important addition to the growing literature on the myth and the reality of "Appalachia."

Speer became interested in Earl Palmer when he offered his vast collection (20,000-30,000 negatives) to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. She met Palmer in 1985 and for three years worked with him, taping interviews, and as she puts it, becoming "family" to Earl and his wife Evelyn. Speer describes this book as an introduction to Palmer's photography—featuring only 120 prints which represent the "mainstream" of his work between 1936 and 1988. Though the pictures cover a 50-year period, their subjects do not reflect the changes wrought by time—and therein lies the problem. A portrait of Newton Hylton in the 1940s is not very different from one taken of Sam "Thumpkeg" Dehart in 1986. Though nearly 50 years removed from each other, both men represent Palmer's "oldtime mountaineer"—a prototype which does not change with time.

Speer's introduction clearly shows how Palmer's background, education, and career shaped his prototypical vision of Appalachia. She includes vignettes out of Palmer's life which "read" like his photographs. When he was seven years old, Palmer saved the "signatures from twenty-seven Arbuckle coffee containers to redeem for a simple camera," and was "bitten forever by the shutter bug." In 1921, his mother drove him to Union College in Barbourville, Ky., and traded hams, shoulders and sidemeat for his tuition. In 1943, while working for the A&P, he was indicted for illegally selling sugar to a moonshiner, a prototype he always revered. Born in 1905 and reared in a time of "major social upheaval," he "had a foot" in two worlds: "the fading agricultural world and the booming industrial world."

But Palmer has chosen to depict (and sometimes invent) the first world—a pastoral Appalachia, free of satellite dishes, K-marts, electrical instruments and ethnic minorities. Speer's introduction shows exactly how Palmer invents his Appalachia by posing subjects, adding costumes and artifacts, and literally building scenes in the darkroom, a practice which Mark Roskill and David Carrier call "visual lying." Palmer depicts "as if" Appalachia rather than "is," a phenomenon long identified by such writers as Jim Wayne Miller and Henry Shapiro. According to Shapiro, the "as if" image has supplanted the reality.

Palmer's Appalachia, like that of Mary Noailles Murfree, John Fox, Jr., and Jesse Stuart, is symbolized by the strong, independent mountaineer, "the quaint embodiment of cherished American values: independence, pride, self-reliance, loyalty." And his photographs were sought by magazines which "sold" America on this myth of Appalachia as an "isolated, homogeneous folk culture unchanged by time or circumstance"—Standard Oil Company's *Scenic South*;

Earl Palmer's photo in Patrick County, Va., 1956. ". . . He artfully arranges a basket, two crockery jugs, and a gourd around the threshold of a worn and weathered log building . . . these are obviously (and by admission) not 'found' scenes . . . but created scenes expressive of the photographers' conception of the essence of Appalachia." Jean Haskell Speer.

Courtesy of the Appalachian Collection, University Libraries, Virginia Tech.

Chrysler Corporation's *Dodge News*; De Soto's *People and Places*; *Travel Magazine* and *Mountain Life and Work*.

The media are still selling America on this mythical Appalachian kingdom, and readers are still more comfortable with Palmer's pictures than with stark photographic representations such as Wendy Ewald's *Portraits and Dreams: Photographs and Stories by Children of the Appalachians*. That Palmer and Ewald "see" two different Appalachias should awaken us to the rhetorical and political power of visual representations. That Jean Speer has shown us how and why Palmer's representation evolved makes *The Appalachian Photographs of Earl Palmer* an important addition to Appalachian studies literature.

Roberta Herrin is associate professor of English at ETSU and president of the Appalachian Studies Association.

The West Virginia Mine Wars: An Anthology

Edited by
David Alan Corbin
Appalachian Editions,
Trans-Allegheny Books
114 Capitol Street,
Charleston W.Va.
$9.95 (paperback)

Denise Giardina

Over the past 10 years, the West Virginia mine wars have gone from neglect as a subject of inquiry to one of the hottest topics in Appalachian history. Much of the credit goes to David Alan Corbin, whose book, *Life, Work, and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*, first published in 1981, provided an interesting and detailed look at Southern West Virginia's past. This first work was recently reissued by the University of Illinois Press.

Now Corbin has performed another service with a new volume of primary source documents. In this collection of speeches, transcripts of government testimony and magazine articles of the period, he has gathered a sampler of the materials used by historians, novelists and filmmakers to tell a dramatic story of labor conflict.

As one who has worked with these documents to create fiction, I have often fielded questions about what "really happened" in Southern West Virginia in the 1912 to 1921. This slim publication will answer at least some of those questions, although it is not all-encompassing. The transcripts of testimony before a U.S. Senate investigating committee, for example, fill three thick volumes. But they are only available, to my knowledge, from the Library of Congress or the West Virginia state archives. Corbin has chosen wisely, and makes some of the most fascinating exchanges accessible to the reading public, along with other selected pieces.

Here for example, is Chief of Police Sid Hatfield giving his version of the Matewan Massacre: "Someone went and told the mayor that the detectives had me arrested, and the mayor came out to see what the charges were. . . and he told Felts that he would give bond for me, that he could not afford to let me go to Bluefield. Felts told him that he could not take any bond, and the mayor asked him for the warrant, and he gave the warrant to the mayor and the mayor read the warrant and said it was bogus, it was not legal, and then he shot the mayor."

Or here is Gianiana Seville, an Italian miner's wife, speaking through a translator: "Then they [the mine guards] came into our house, and they opened the door, and then they came in and looked under the bed; and then on the bed was my baby, and it was asleep, and I told the guards to let the baby alone. . . and they struck me and I fell down, and then they kicked me in the stomach and they hit me with their fists in here. . . [at the time of the beating] I was pregnant for five months. . . And I was sick until the 14th day of August, when they took me to the hospital at Hansford and the baby was born dead."

Here too is the spectacle of Quinn Morton—the coal operator on board the infamous Bull Moose Special which shot up a strikers' tent camp at Holly Grove—denying the testimony of eyewitnesses who claimed he said, "Let's go back and give them another round," and engaging in a screaming match with the senator questioning him.

Readers interested in discovering the seeds which grow into fiction will find them here. In *The Scapegoat*, Mary Lee Settle's Mother Jones tells miners that God was the first union organizer when he brought the people of Israel out of Egypt, a statement found in the transcript of an actual speech given in Charleston. The company spy C.E. Lively, central to the plot of John Sayles' film *Matewan*, is described by New York reporter Winthrop Lane as operating "a restaurant in the little town of Matewan, and this restaurant was situated directly underneath the meeting place of the union in that spot; in fact, the union was his landlord, and he paid his rent to it." This calls to mind the scenes when the

fictional Joe Kenehan talks to miners in that same restaurant, and when later Lively is found out and the restaurant burned.

My own novel *Storming Heaven* also made use of these sources—Ed Chambers' wife telling how she hit C.E. Lively with her umbrella after he shot her husband, reporters for *The Nation* describing local union leaders who grew into my characters.

Or this, also from *The Nation,* on the march to Blair Mountain:

". . . an auto with women passes us.

" 'See our Red Cross nurses?'

" 'The women have nurses' white head-dresses, with big blue letters on the band over the brow, 'U.M.W.'

" 'They're wives of some of the boys. They've had experience nursing. They say they'll see this through.' "

And so Carrie Bishop was born.

There are plenty of other gems in this collection, such as Don Chafin, sheriff of Logan County, nearly murdering a man come to start a chapter of the Knights of Pythias because Chafin mistook him for a union organizer. Or novelist James M. Cain's stereotyped and lurid description of life in the coalfields, where he claimed "whole families were exterminated in feuds." The book is a treasure trove for the labor historian or anyone who wants to know more about life in the early coalfields firsthand through the eyes of both insiders and outsiders, straight from the horse's mouth.

Denise Giardina is a novelist and activist whose novel ***Storming Heaven*** *was set in West Virginia during the mine wars.*

The Invention of Appalachia

by

Allen W. Batteau

The University of Arizona Press, Tucson
1990
$29.95 (hardback)

Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture

Edited by

W.K. McNeil

U.M.I. Research Press, Ann Arbor and London
1989
$44.95 (hardback)

Richard Blaustein

The very first sentence of Allen Batteau's history of Appalachian stereotypes is deliberately provocative. Batteau launches *The Invention of Appalachia* by asserting that: "Appalachia is a creature of the urban imagination." For more than a century, city-bred intellectuals have been retrofitting the history and culture of the southern highlands to suit their own disparate purposes, so that today it is virtually impossible to separate fact from fiction. The people of the Southern Appalachians themselves have had little control over the imagery imposed upon them by outsiders yet have had to live with its social and personal consequences.

Batteau contends that it is ultimately fruitless to try to distinguish Appalachia's history from the myths surrounding it. Rather than debunking myths about Appalachia, Batteau is principally concerned with understanding their origins and explaining their persistent cultural and social effects: "My object here is to appreciate the accomplishment involved in the invention of Appalachia rather than point out its factual inaccuracies."

Trained as a cultural anthropologist, Batteau does not automatically equate myth with falsehood. Instead, he views myth as a system of axiomatic principles embedded in a narrative structure through which an established social and cultural order is sanctified and justified. The validity of American myths about Appalachia is not grounded in history as we ordinarily understand it, but in the practical effects which these mythic symbols have had in motivating social reformers, from the settlement school teachers who came to the southern highlands in the late 19th century to the poverty warriors of the 1960s and early 1970s. As Batteau observes: "The challenge, then, in understanding the image and its development is to understand the difference between those points where the imagery of Appalachia has contributed to American history and society and those points where it has falsified that history." He stresses the complexity of American and Appalachian experience, the processes of dynamic interplay that have caused us to reconstruct our notions of Appalachia within the broader context of the renegotiation of American identity in general.

The body of *The Invention of Appalachia* is devoted to analyses of the mythopoetic elements of landmark documentaries and fictional works that have brought about fundamental changes in external perceptions of Appalachia, running the gamut from Mary Noailles Murfree's local color romances of the 1870s to the *Foxfire* books produced by Eliot Wigginton and his students in rural Rabun County, Ga., since the early 1970s and touching nearly every high point in between. Batteau approaches these major works as "summarizing symbols," as grand metaphors or paradigms that reshape an entire society's perceptions of social and cultural realities.

He is fundamentally concerned with the evolving poetics of Appalachia: "At bottom, *all consciousness is poetic*. All forms of seeing the world, experiencing the world, placing faith in the world, are derived from, refracted form, or prefigured by mythopoetic forms."

Though Batteau is willing to invest truth and value in myth, he is by no means morally or politically neutral. He comes out against materialistic tendencies in American society that would reduce all cultural values to the status of salable goods: "To a greater extent than one finds satisfactory, Appalachia today is packaged and sold as a commodity. . .The Appalachian region, its stock of natural resources now sadly depleted, is finding its rituals and symbols rapidly mined for export. . .Whose Appalachia is this?" Citing the *Foxfire* books, quilts, baskets, and mountain dulcimers as pertinent examples, Batteau acknowledges that many natives of the region have been willing accomplices in the expropriation of what were once their own traditions. Formerly utilitarian artifacts are transmuted into folkloresque *objets de nostalgie* that fulfill the romantic desires of rootless mainstream Americans for rootedness. Such objects become tangible links to an idealized folk community set in a pastoral Golden Age emanating from the mythogenic mists of cosmopolitan self-alienation: " a new set of commodities is enlisted to satisfy a public that demands an escape from the commodity system."

Batteau's analytical approach owes

much to the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss, placing a great deal of emphasis upon the resolution of various dialectic oppositions, such as Nature vs. Culture, Community vs. Bureaucracy, Male vs. Female, Rational vs. Irrational, Domestic vs. Capitalistic, Highland vs. Lowland, Traditional vs. Progressive, as well as Folk vs. Urban.

Every point of view implies a corresponding blind spot. Though elegantly framed, Batteau's conceptual constructs and rhetoric are not ultimately persuasive, at least to this reviewer. Someone ostensibly concerned with self-empowerment should have given the people under discussion more opportunities to speak for themselves than Batteau has provided. Given the current surge of regionalism, separatism and other types of pluralistic movements around the world, closer attention to the political dynamics of identity reformulation would have been more illuminating than the arguably fallacious (and possibly even phallocentric) Marxist and Freudian theorizing that pervades so much of *The Invention of Appalachia*. Speaking as an Appalachianist, I feel that Batteau has underestimated the significance of the Appalachian Studies movement itself as a manifestation of identity reformulation and cultural revitalization.

Speaking as a folklorist, I feel that Batteau's criticism of folk culture and the folklore profession is more facile than valid. "Without educated interpreters, folk culture would not exist per se. . . Folk culture is the symbolic production of a relatively powerless group, selected for its distinctiveness and specificity, and presented to the audience through the intermediation of a properly credentialed authority, so that its audience will know that it is 'authentic.'" Here again, Batteau appears to favor neat metaphors over untidy historical complexities.

Batteau's rhetoric may be thick, but his historical knowledge is thin in several critical areas. (In particular, he totally fails to grasp the connections between hillbilly humor and the broader genre of rube comedy, which obscured the tragedy of the failure of populism and the impending collapse of the family farm in America at the turn of the twentieth century). Though Batteau has couched some genuinely intriguing questions, *The Invention of Appalachia* is by no means a definitive treatment of Appalachian cultural history, if indeed such a thing is possible.

Formerly utilitarian artifacts are transmuted into folkloresque objets de nostalgie that fulfill the romantic desires of rootless mainstream Americans for rootedness.

The scholarly reader interested in substantiating Batteau's theories should investigate W. K. McNeil's *Appalachian Images in Folk and Popular Culture,* an anthology of 21 essays written between 1860 and 1987 documenting various facets of Appalachian social and cultural life. Like Batteau, McNeil seeks to demonstrate how perceptions of Appalachia have evolved over time. Instead of engaging in extensive theorizing, McNeil presents the reader with representative examples of descriptive writing about Appalachia by travelers and journalists (1860-1896), educators and social workers (1899-1929), sociologists and other academics concerned with social and cultural change (1930-46), and ethnographic studies by a psychologist and several folklorists (1960-87).

Particularly noteworthy are Will Wallace Harney's "A Strange Land and a Peculiar People," (1873), William Goodell Frost's, "Our Contemporary Ancestors in the Southern Mountains, " (1899), John Fox, Jr.'s, "The Southern Mountaineer, " (1901), John H. Ashworth's, "The Virginia Mountaineers," (1913), Mary French Caldwell, "Change Comes To The Appalachian Mountaineer," (1930), Allen W. Eaton, "The Mountain Handicrafts: Their Importance to the Country and the People in the Mountain Homes," (1930), Berthold E. Schwarz, "Ordeal by Serpents, Fire and Strychine: A Study of Some Provocative Psychosomatic Phenomena," (1960), Henry Glassie, "The Appalachian Log Cabin," (1963), and Michael Ann Williams," Rethinking the House: Interior Space and Social Change," (1987).

McNeil's brief yet authoritative introduction essentially covers the same territory addressed by Batteau in *The Invention of Appalachia.*

Though McNeil questions the validity of persistent notions concerning the purported isolation of Appalachia from mainstream America, he still acknowledges the power of stereotypes to determine what is considered true and real: "Yet, whether the isolation is real or only perceived, it is indisputably one of the major 'facts' popularly held about Appalachia. Until approximately the time of the Civil War this feature did not seem to distinguish the region from other remote, unexplored, and undeveloped locales. Now, it became a place that was not just isolated but also unique, having its own peculiar people."

McNeil provides insightful discussions of major commentators on southern mountain life and culture, including Emma Bell Miles, Horace Kephart and John C. Campbell, all sympathetic outsiders who had come to identify with Appalachia and its people. Their writings concerning the region were, according to McNeil, "sympathetic and relativistic" and "neither condescending nor sentimental." A native of western North Carolina himself, McNeil is acutely sensitive to inherent biases in accounts of Appalachia by insiders and outsiders. He notes overstatements such as the claim of racial purity of the region's Anglo-Saxon (or Scotch-Irish, or Elizabethan) population, undue concentration upon East Kentucky and the coal country of the Cumberlands, and a rosy-hued aura of romanticism surrounding the region's folklife that refuses to be dispelled despite the best efforts of Appalachian historians.

A widely respected folklorist in his own right, McNeil goes to admirable lengths to avoid slanting this collection in favor of his own discipline. Though folk culture has been of great interest to Appalachian social activists, it has been a means to an end and not necessarily an end in itself: "It is significant that many of the numerous publications concerned with Appalachian folklife were not regarded by their authors as folklore studies at all, but rather as sociological works dealing with the 'problem' of Appalachia and how to treat its various ills."

Nonethless, the fact remains that this collection of essays, particularly in its last section, *does* reflect some of the intrinsic biases of the folklore profession. While the articles selected by McNeil are all extremely well-written and informative, *Appalachian Images* inadvertently leaves the impression that serpent-handling and

log construction are more significant aspects of contemporary Appalachian life than they are in fact. What we find here are examples of a common folkloristic fallacy: the tendency to confuse the distinctive with the typical. Though McNeil attempts to address this thorny issue in his introduction, the unsophisticated reader may still come away from this book with the impression that serpent-handling is more than marginal to the mainstream of Appalachian religious life, or that log cabins and split rail fences have anything more than nostalgic significance to most people in the region today. Personally I would have liked to have seen more discussion of Appalachian imagery in popular culture, particularly in the mass media.

Nonetheless, *Appalachian Images* is still a very welcome addition to the literature in Appalachian Studies. Providing excellent examples of the primary sources cited by Batteau in *The Invention of Appalachia*, this compilation should be of great interest and value to folklorists, cultural historians and other humanistic scholars. Indeed, each of these books makes up for the limitations of the other; read together they could serve as the basis of an excellent course in Appalachian cultural history. As a teacher, my only hesitation in assigning these books to my students would be their combined cost. Their publishers would be doing us all a favor if they would consider bringing out books like this in paperback so that more teachers and students of Appalachian cultural history could benefit from them. Regardless of their cost, both of these books should be required reading for anyone seriously concerned with Appalachia.

Technological Man Meditating

Driving down the Mountain Parkway
At seventy miles per hour
with the air-conditioning and radio on,
I have returned to the technological womb.

Hillbilly airwaves get inside my head
And perform an electronic lobotomy:
To the suffering strains of second love,
My born-again synapses relax.

The distractions to drive away distraction work:
Speed, air, and sound blow away the pollution
Of petty concerns and leave
The mind pleasantly clear.

Freed of earthbound imperatives, it
Sails off like a clay pigeon into the universe,
Where, like a free-faller facing upward,
it contemplates the mysteries of the design.

—David Black

The New Reconstruction

Are they really Southern, those glossy magazines
with "South" or "Southern" in their titles?
It's carpet-bagging in reverse:
full of ads for resorts we don't visit,
festivals and craft fairs we don't attend;
cornbread recipes for those who don't know how.
And when they run out of cornbread recipes,
who knows what they'll try next?
Southern quiche, maybe: instant cheese grits
stirred into scrambled eggs; or maybe
black-eyed peas and okra marinade.
God help 'em, though, if they try sushi—
down here raw fish is bait.

—Harold Branam

Family Portrait

Four little boys arranged by size
starched white ruffled shirts
long collars full cuffs spread
against short black jackets like
the breast of a downy woodpecker
white box pleated skirts edge long black boots

They stare
beneath wide beribboned hats
set atop long dark curls
stare straight ahead at the camera
without smile or grimace

Daughter of the boy
with soft eyes and wondering mouth
just a little older than
he in the portrait seeks
long and hard for a suggestion
in these subdued boys of the bald
large nosed volatile men she knew
He whose gentle eyes
now hide behind thick rimmed glasses
tentative mouth hardened by
the frame of a mustache
with his brothers so compliant here

The image dissolves
as each brother drifts away
loosening the grasp of
doting mother and martinet father

—Carol Griffin

Carol Griffin is a retired psychotherapist who is now concentrating on writing in Lexington, Ky.

David Black teaches English at Louisa County High in Virginia. His poem, "Neighbors," appeared in the Summer 1991 ***Now and Then.***

Harold Branam lives in Philadelphia, Pa.

Broke-Eye Nostalgia

Our Picture Tube cracked when I was young.
Just a small chink,
a hairline fracture along the edge,
I think.

I don't know when it happened.
I'm not sure if it was there in Sixty-Four
I don't remember any I wanna
hold your hand's on the floor,
and I'll swear
that in November
Sixty-Three it wasn't there.

I do remember, clearly, all the fun
I had when Let's play two!'s 500th
home run
bounced into my tiny glove
and I didn't stop to think of the mystery
but took it straight into the yard
and we all played Pickle with
History.

And in the sharpest focus I
recall the big fuss
when Mom came in that July
day and on the floor was sprinkled Apollo dust

And whenever I was hungry
but Mom and Dad weren't to be found
What's up, Doc? and I yam what I yam
left vegetables around.

But...
I'm not sure
what ever happened to that set
Of all the parts of a story
to forget.
Right now, when I have 171
channels on cable,
Some days I'm not even able
to turn the damn thing on
although

that doesn't stop me
from sitting there
watching the curved glass
where
my reflections are
held fast.

—Charles M. Saplak

Charles M. Saplak lives in Radford, Virginia with his wife and daughter. His work has been published in ***EOTU, Potato Eyes, Miscellaneous Ink,*** *and other magazines.*

Twist You Up

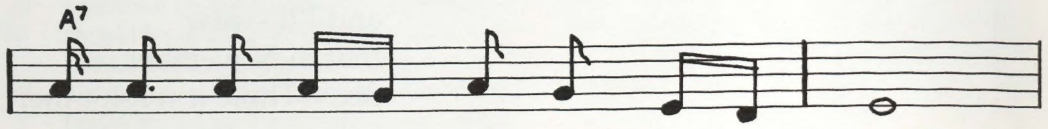
In the Appalachian region two professional theater companies usually include traditional or original music in most of their work. Roadside, based in Whitesburg, Ky., and the Road Company, based in Johnson City, Tenn., both create original dramas based on regional or the personal histories of the members of the ensemble. Both companies tour widely.

My experience of using music in theater goes back to the days when the Road Company first got started in 1975. My job then was to pick around on the guitar while actors improvised scenes related to the concept they were working on. In recent years the task has been to create music that is appropriate to the play, then shaping its performance in a way that blends with the rhythm of the piece.

I wrote and sang "Twist You Up" in the latest play developed by the Road Company. "Changes" was written to reflect the changes in the community here in East Tennessee and the changes in some lives. I had several old wise women in mind. The setting is that place that is personally special to each of us, maybe still mysterious.

—Ed Snodderly

❶ She's one of a kind one of a kind

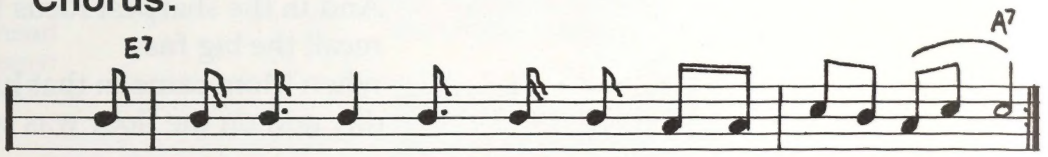


One new dress all her life has been e - nough

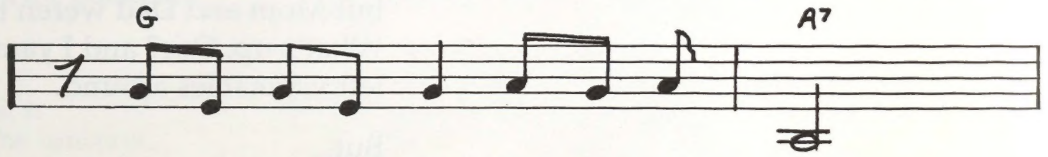
She got that dress to go downtown to vote for FDR
One place all her life in this tiny holler

She says you don't need much to get by
Not as much as one might think
Sure it gets lonely here, now that everyone's gone
From this hillside view I've watched them pass

Chorus:



Say, won't that road twist you up like a rubber band



Could you twist the lid off of this jar

❷ One of a kind, one of a kind
You've got sayings like I never heard
The old knife, in the weeds there's snakes in the summertime
How long has it been since you lost him

Would you mind if I just walked and looked around
I got a feeling away down deep
I've been traveling this other world feeling like its coming down
I've just got to get to a place

Chorus

❸ This place is quiet, real cool
This place is so far off the beaten path
The oak trees shade the porch can play a rhythm it remembers
Of banjo plings a soft breeze in the evening

She's one of a kind, one of a kind
She's got a look in her eyes that's never been tamed
And it's a sight to see her scratching dirt with her cane
Scratching dirt with her cane as I leave, she says

Chorus

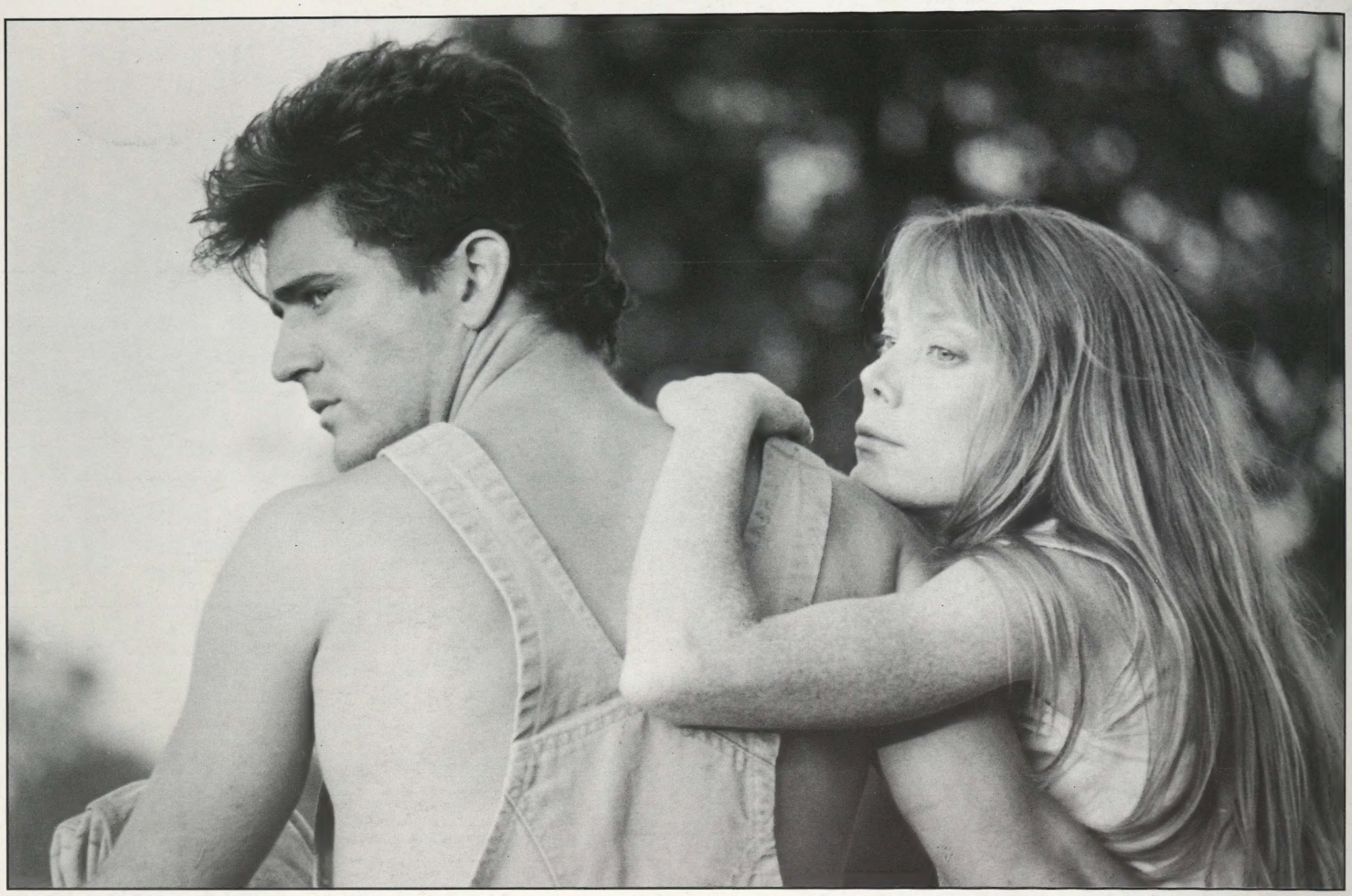
© Drivin Round Music, 1990

Actor Gary Cooper and Sgt. Alvin C. York of Fentress County, Tenn., meeting at Cooper's home in Hollywood in 1940. Cooper portrayed York, the Tennessee mountaineer who was the greatest hero of World War I. At their meeting the two men didn't have much to say to each other until the subject of guns came up. Then they both gladly discussed their hunting weapons.

The overwhelming response to *Sergeant York* illustrates the enduring importance of the "idea" of Appalachia in modern America. As a propaganda device, the film was very effective and made Alvin York a legend, but it achieved these ends by portraying Appalachia in extremely idealized terms. Despite York's initial insistence that the film would be "a story of our people up there in the mountains," it instead manipulated popular stereotypes about the mountains to arouse nationalistic fervor. Ignoring the complexity of the mountain experience, the filmmakers show Appalachians as religious and patriotic people whose poverty is simultaneously picturesque and ennobling. These quasi-pioneers represent the lasting validity of the American value system even in times of chaos and upheaval, and Sergeant York became the embodiment of these virtues. As a consequence, *Sergeant York* tells us less about Appalachia than it does about the larger society which applauded it.

— David D. Lee

"The Making of Sergeant York" from *The South and Film*, Warren French, ed., 1981.



Mel Gibson and Sissy Spacek, starring in *The River,* filmed on the Holston River in Northeast Tennessee in 1984.

NOW AND THEN

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COMING UP
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